



# students attend radical activist workshop in dc



photo/Kendra Schinner

Bard students and other conference attendees listen and learn at the 9th annual National Conference on Organized Resistance.

BY BECCA ROM-FRANK

At four am on March 6, one day before the 9<sup>th</sup> annual National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR), an unidentified cyclist tossed a homemade bomb into the army recruitment station in Times Square. At NCOR, groups of people could be heard enthusiastically discussing the news, and one table at the conference even offered free stickers with a sketch depicting a Zorro-like figure on a bicycle holding an explosive, with the words “I Heart the Bicycle Bomber.” The radical action of the “bicycle bomber” seemed generally lauded by the majority of NCOR’s participants, but anyone who attended would know that Anarchist Theory is more complex than a punk attitude.

On March 7, twenty-five Bard students drove down to Washington D.C. in order to attend NCOR, an annual activist conference held on the main campus of American University, which seeks to “bring together activists from a variety of issues, struggles, ideologies and backgrounds for a weekend of learning and reflecting on the state of progressive movements occurring locally, nationally and worldwide,” according to the event’s website ([www.ncor2008.org](http://www.ncor2008.org)). In addition to providing an open-minded atmosphere, NCOR offers a range of workshops, panel discussions, and informational tables aimed to promote organized action against “the injustices and inequalities that we confront in our daily lives and in the world.” This year it was held March 7-9, with workshops running on Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 in the evening.

The conference itself was organized by a coalition of social action-focused student clubs at the university, known as Community for Action and Social Justice. They receive partial funding from AU’s Student Activities Department.

About a hundred total workshops were offered over the course of the weekend, and a participant could choose to attend up to five workshops in one day. The workshops and lectures, held inside three different AU buildings, featured titles such as, “In the World But Not of It: New Anti-Authoritarian Approaches to Reform Struggles,” and ranged in subject matter from animal rights to environmental justice to gender identity. A series of lectures designated as the “Radical Theory Track” included talks by experienced organizers on the history and goals of a radical movement. A schedule listing the times and descriptions of the workshops was distributed, and some “spontaneous workshops” were announced throughout the weekend. Speakers tended to be experienced organizers or non-profit group leaders, although there were several talks by college professors. All in all, according to sophomore Dan Raskin, the event was well organized, although the workshops were an unexpected blend of smoothly-run talks by very knowledgeable, interesting people, to “really dumb topics run by unqualified speakers.”

Raskin had been looking forward to attending one particular lecture for about a year titled “Radical Sustainability for Autonomous Communities.” The workshop was conducted by members of the Rhizome Collective, a non-profit community organizing project based out of Austin, Texas that develops techniques for creating de-centralized, sustainable urban infrastructure. “It’s what I’m interested in, and I wanted to hear about it for myself,” he said.

While Raskin was generally satisfied with his schedule, choosing workshops proved more difficult for some students. Sophomore Liza Birnbaum chose hers based on her interests, and thus attended many workshops on Anarchist Theory. Looking back, however, she realized it

would have been more helpful to attend workshops that played to her strengths as a demonstration organizer. During the Q&A sessions after every workshop, “the best questions were asked by the people who were actually organizers, or who were actually knowledgeable about the subject being discussed,” said Birnbaum.

The majority of the attendees appeared to be college-aged or environs, but a number were older, more experienced organizers. In many workshops, Bard students found themselves in attendance with independent media journalists, labor organizers, members of sustainable communes, and alternative educators.

When not in a workshop, there was time for browsing amongst many booths run by activist groups, most of whom had also sponsored workshops. There, attendees could buy radical books, zines, and apparel, and pick up radical flyers, pamphlets and buttons. It also provided an excellent opportunity for people to talk and connect with one another. “It’s such an amazing opportunity to talk to people from all over about what is going on in the radical community,” said Birnbaum. Raskin agreed, adding that he didn’t necessarily learn anything new about the movement but that the real experience was sharing perspectives and smaller tidbits of information.

Rachel Worthington, a second-year transfer student, attended NCOR last year as a student at American University. The CASJ are “a pretty small minority on campus,” she said. “Their involvement contrasts pretty majorly with the rest of the AU student body.” In her first year at AU, Worthington noticed an excessive amount of bullying and tension between AU students and NCOR conferees. She reports seeing a number of “Frat Boy types” holding petitions to kick “those smelly anarchists off OUR campus,” and, due to an impromptu pipe-bomb construction workshop, rumors circulated that the anarchists were a danger to the campus. Although the conference is now deliberately held during AU’s spring break, tensions have not necessarily ceased to exist. “It was really weird when I went last year,” said Worthington, whose family resides in Washington, D.C. “It seemed like most of the AU students who stayed over break hid on one side of campus, while the other side of campus turned into a radical vegan-sandwich eating sunbathing fest.”

In sum, the conference made a lasting impression on all who attended. “NCOR ruined my life!” cried first-year Johanna Warren, when asked about her experience at the event. “It was really informative and interesting – but I can’t do anything, now that I’m aware that the world around me is going to hell,” she explained.

Worthington, however, found the whole experience empowering. “I don’t feel apathy or a sense of helplessness leaving those workshops,” she said. “NCOR brings the people fighting for equality, solidarity, and freedom to its conferences. The conference shows what is being done and what I, or anyone, can do to help out— to spread the word.”

March 19 marks the fifth anniversary of the war in Iraq.

## budget forum: a hostile environment? concerns about diversity prompt consideration of a new budget allocation process

BY RYAN GUSTAFSON

Responding to the outrage of affinity groups over the most recent Budget Forum’s allocation process, Dean of Students Erin Cannan and other members of the administration have pursued legal council to determine if Budget Forum violates the rights of some Bard students. This action may bring about fundamental changes to club funding procedures. The decision to pursue legal council is indicative of the administration’s desire to reform the allocation process, which has traditionally been managed by Student Government’s Planning Committee and amended by the student body at Budget Forum.

Although the College’s discussions with Roberta E. Tarshis of the firm Tarshis and Hammerman are still in a preliminary phase, Cannan indicated the Forum might violate “hostile environment” standards and alcohol regulations. Though she has not yet investigated the matter formally, Cannan hopes that Tarshis will meet with a coalition of interested parties—members of the administration, the diversity commission, student government, and affinity groups—to assess the legality of current allocation procedures with the ultimate aim of reforming them. Student Government has already stated its preference that the budget allocation process should remain independent of the administration and has suggested reforms of its own.

There have been no concrete determinations about what a new allocation system would look like. Cannan stated that a major consideration of reform should be ensuring that certain clubs that “accord with the mission of the institution” more than others have a source of funding that is unaffected by Budget Forum. In addition to affinity group clubs, such groups might include academic, literary, and journalistic publications. It has not been determined

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observer

# minds come together to decide is america too religious?

By Alex Eriksen

Students, faculty and community members filled nearly all 400 seats of Olin Hall to attend a debate held by the Bard Political Union Thursday night, Mar 13. The topic was the resolution “America is too religious” which was supported by President of the college, Leon Botstein, alongside sophomore Frank Brancely and senior Shay Howell. Arguing against was college chaplain and theology Professor Bruce Chilton, with senior John Burrows and sophomore Ben Raker. “What we’re trying to do is create exciting conversation about contemporary issues,” said President of the Bard Political Union, Andrew Simon, a 19-year-old sophomore and American Studies major. “The point of tonight’s debate isn’t necessarily to draw one particular end-all-conclusion, but to start with one particular conclusion and work our way backwards,” said Simon.

The debate began with a vote from the audience on the resolution by a show of hands, “too religious” won by majority. “Religion cannot be proven, it is decided,” said Botstein in his opening statement. He argued that religion interferes with the democratic process when private religious dogmas become a means of superseding the authority of the state. Botstein argued that education, medical research and women’s and children’s rights have suffered when scriptural law overrides that of the nation. He cited the practices of the Church of Christ, Scientist, a Christian sect founded in 1879, which teaches that death, sickness, and the material world are illusions. The church prefers prayer in lieu of medical treatment. As a result, countless children of Christ Scientists have died from treatable illnesses. The church remains unreformed to this day. “To impose a religious life would end democracy,” said Botstein. “We are reasonable, ethical, logical beings capable of forming a government without appeals to the divine.”

Professor Chilton cut the tension early on by opening with a joke: “I’d like to thank President Botstein for introducing me. Now I’d like to introduce him as my boss,” said Chilton. In his opening statement he identified religious fundamentalism as the true target of the discussion. “Having in mind certain specific problems there’s a tendency to take religion for them all and reach false conclusions,” said Chilton. “If the resolution was ‘America is too fundamentalist’ I would not be able to argue against it.” Chilton went on to liken religious radicalism to spiritual junk food “it’s a lot like greasy potato chips and if you don’t like them, the solution is not to stop eating,” said Chilton. He stressed that religion and fundamentalism are two different things and that eliminating theological studies only allows fundamentalists to fill the gap and garner attention for themselves. “They start with the infallibility of the bible and they go down hill from there,” said Chilton. “What we need is to find how we can develop a discourse to promote healthy debate and discussion on both sides of the issue.” Student panelists gave their arguments with more brevity. Brancely argued that widespread public opinion made the issue too broad to make any definite decision. Howell cited a letter from her father, given to her two days after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. Her argument centered on mortality as a focal point of all religious consideration. “We don’t live in a world of black and white, just a spectrum of grey,” said Howell. Burrows and Raker forwarded that systems of religious thinking invariably affect public life and should be more privatized but that religion itself was not the issue. The remainder of the debate was a light-hearted exchange between Botstein and Chilton. They discussed Pope Benedict XVI plans to visit the United States next month and criticized his policy to bar Catholics who support abortion from receiving communion. They also discussed America’s religious future, Botstein suggesting a revival of Catholicism as a traditional religion not unlike its surge in the 1960s. He also predicted Mexican and South American churches would play crucial roles in shaping American’s future religious landscape. Before their closing statements they took questions from the audience. One of the first audience members



From left to right: Event organizer and President of the Bard Political Union Andrew Simon, College Chaplain and Theology Professor Bruce Chilton, President Leon Botstein, and Event Moderator Abhay Puskoor.

Photo/Mae Colburn

to speak was a Catholic student who read a statement asking the Bard campus not to discriminate against religious views. She stated that several of her religious friends had left the college due to the negative atmosphere towards religious students. Botstein later responded, in an interview with the Observer: “I think there’s a lot of religious toleration, but there’s probably a lot of fun-making of people who are not in a norm. I think the college needs to do more to protect minorities of opinion. There’s a kind of thoughtless consensus about many issues and the people who deviate from that sometimes need some protection by the institution so they don’t feel isolated. Society has this hate problem— we’re not very tolerant when you get down to it and we’re not particularly interested in hearing someone who doesn’t agree with us.” In their closing statements each side agreed to condemn radicalism while promoting civic activity and dialogue. “People who never learn to agree to disagree dissent into offense, people are offended by the other person’s behavior and that’s just wrong,” said Botstein. Both audience members and debate participants seemed

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-President Botstein

pleased with the discussions that took place. “I thought the debate was really informative, in that it brought up several key distinctions that will definitely change the way I think about religion and politics in this country from now on,” said junior Vivianne Greenwood. Botstein agreed: “It was a great event, wonderful to see so many people, both community people and those in the college. Students on the panel were great, it was very well organized.” The topic had shifted by the end to the conclusion that America is too fundamentalist and the vote came out with a more even-sided outcome. “The vote was really just a tool to gauge what people thought as the came in and what they thought as they left, it wasn’t the integral part of the program” said Simon. The debate was the inaugural event of the Bard Political Union, a new group on campus formed with funds from the senior gift of the class of 2007. Alumnus Ethan Porter is recognized as the club’s founder and senior gift benefactor. The club’s next event will take place on April 22 and will be a debate between students and Colonel Michael Meese, head of the social studies department for West Point U.S. Military Academy. The resolution will be that the American Military should remain in Iraq.

## gender and sexuality studies: revitalized and re-energized

By Genya Shimkin

The Gender and Sexuality Studies (GSS) Program is not dead. It is alive and well, and undergoing a makeover. Over the past few months, a committee of students—including Genya Shimkin, Mette Loulou von Kohl, Evan Spigelman, and Michael Burgevin— has been working with Dean of the College and the Program’s interim director Michele Dominy and a team of dedicated faculty members to revitalize and expand the program. At a recent lunch meeting, we shared ideas and discussed expanded course offerings with Dominy, Tom Keenan, Kristin Scheible, and Robert Weston.

In the past, the GSS Program has been hindered by a number of factors. Generally speaking, the program was strong through the nineties, but suffered a drop in enrollment after the inception of the Human Rights Program in 2002-2003, which provided students with new interdisciplinary opportunities. Perhaps the single largest issue was that of identity politics. “The critical distinction is between identity as an analytic category and personal identity which can be seen as reductive,” explained Dominy. “Faculty prefer to hold to theory— guide the discussion through theory, not to have students begin with the self.” This conflict caused a number of faculty members, who felt that personal identity was playing too much of a role in class discussions, to pull back from the GSS Program, explaining the limited course offerings.

GSS’ biggest problem at the moment is that there is no faculty member able to take on the role of Director. Though a number of junior faculty members have demonstrated a deep commitment to GSS, they are stretched too thin and cannot commit to a Directorship. Dominy has stepped in to ensure that the program stays afloat, but what the committee is pushing for is a tenure-track faculty position in GSS. However, this is tricky (and here’s where it gets a little confusing, so bear with us). Because GSS is so interdisciplinary, hiring GSS faculty has always meant hiring people into other programs (history, anthropology, literature, etc) and then having them offer cross-listed GSS courses. This was done so that should the program collapse, the faculty member would not lose their job, especially since—as Dominy points out— gaining tenure in interdisciplinary programs is often quite difficult.

While Dominy believes that it is necessary for a tenured faculty member to become Director, she is hesitant to request a tenure-track line in GSS specifically. Recently the faculty has showed support

for placing the GSS Program within the Human Rights Program (HRP). This would not mean that anyone who moderates in GSS is therefore also a Human Rights major. It simply means that in order to provide the program with a comprehensive infrastructure, it would be placed under the wing of the HRP. In addition, this means that should a search for new tenure-track faculty members in Human Rights be initiated, the student committee could ask that they search for someone who would consistently teach GSS courses (and perhaps direct the program). Dominy informs us that she is very excited about two new hires: Beth Gershuny in clinical psychology and Elizabeth Holt in Arabic language and literature, both of whom bring experience in GSS. There are still a number of faculty searches in progress, so we may gain more GSS faculty in the near future.

For next fall, the student committee is working with faculty on new courses. Emily Barton has already signed on to teach “Development of Lesbian Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries,” and we are hoping George Robb will return to teach another section of “The History of Sexuality.” At our lunch meeting, Robert Weston provided us with a list of courses that he would be willing to offer; this list included everything from “Post-Stonewall Literature” to “Perspectives in LGBT Studies” (which would serve as an Introduction to GSS ) to “Sexuality and the Media.” Other courses for the fall include: “Theories of Self: Gender, Politics and Anti-Racism” with Elaine Thomas, “The Literature of Private Life” with Marina van Zuylen, and “Victorian Bodies” with Deirdre d’Albortis.

Courses proposed by the student committee include: “International Hate Crimes Legislation,” “Sexual and Gender Politics in the Middle East,” “Universalizing Homosexuality,” and “Seminar on AIDS.” The student body continues to demonstrate, in the form of extremely high rates of pre-registration, an intense commitment to GSS courses. Rumor has it that over 100 students requested spots in Nancy Leonard’s “Queer Theory” course last year. Though there is a dedicated core of faculty who will continue to teach GSS courses, in order to meet the demand for these courses, the program needs a director and a tenure-track line.

However, students interested in GSS need not fret. You can still moderate, though the program is not a stand-alone, so you must couple it with something else. If you have questions about GSS moderation contact Michele Dominy or Tom Keenan, and if you are want to get involved with the student committee, contact bardgssprogram@gmail.com.





photo/YouTube

A still from Graeme Reid's film, "Dark and Lovely, Soft and Free." Zakhi, the film's narrator, introduces himself.

## south african gay rights activist speaks

By FRANK BRANCELY

Most Americans would be shocked to find a Constitution designed in the previous decade that departs from those of Western states and actually improves upon the Western model. Heavily derived from its distinct experience with British colonialism and a comprehensive understanding of the political weaknesses of neighboring states, the post-apartheid South African constitution bans the death penalty and includes a same-sex marriage clause, granting gay men and women the right to marry and enjoy the same benefits a heterosexual married couple. Graeme Reid, who is currently teaching in the Gay and Lesbian Studies department at Yale University, was a key activist in the movement that led to the inclusion of this clause in 2006. His lecture Tuesday March 11 in a crowded room in Olin was devoted to the debate that emerged between the political and non-political actors regarding same-sex equality.

The debate surrounding this "canary of the constitution," positive and negative connotations attached, is very much alive. "Nowhere are the ideals of the constitution and the reality more discrepant," said Reid. The gap between public opinion, especially in the rural countryside, and the political platform of the dominant party (the ANC), remains overwhelming. Homosexuality is cast as "un-traditional, un-African, and un-Christian," a by-product of the West. Cases of gay and lesbian social equality persistently find themselves argued before the Constitutional Court. And yet the capacity of the South African political constituency to confront the rights of gay men and women with liberal results is also perceived as a litmus test for the sophistication of the country. It will be "one of the key barometers" that determines the veracity of its progressive quality, a product of democracy. It is precisely this paradoxical position of gay rights that Reid explored Tuesday evening.

Examples that he used to elucidate this paradox included the gay hairdressers in his film, *Dark and Lovely, Soft and Free*, and the progressive theology found in local Pentecostal churches. As beacons of modernity, gays are seen as embracing the newest trends, some hair-stylists achieving near-celebrity status. "Why has homosexuality come to yield such symbolic power in South Africa? What do questions of gender, sexuality, and kinship tell us?" asked Reid. Gender, as the audience would learn, was absolutely implicated in the bedrock of erotic possibility.

"Is there a history of homosexuality in an African context? Is it performative? Is it a fashion?" asked Reid. Exploring the idea that effeminacy is based on traditional gender relationships and the strong association of the perceived rise of homosexuality with "young people," he juxtaposed these notions with quotes, excerpted from debates that raged during the tumultuous process that finally resulted in the inclusion of the clause, "Democracy made it possible for people to choose." What one woman was bewailing was what she saw as the triumph of individual desire over communal necessity, cultural norms and religious conversion.

Homosexuality is still seen as inextricably tied to democracy, human rights, and modernity as well as the demise of tradition. "The West can represent corruption of social values, vulgar consumerism, and sexual decadence, or it can evoke images of modernity, progress, and prosperity," remarked Reid. "Equality between homosexuality and heterosexuality, as well as between men and women, could very well become a defining issue for modern democracies.... Sexual politics is indeed turning into a democratic symbol. This

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whether this funding would still come from the Convocation Fund, which is constituted by the student activities fee and managed by the Planning Committee. Budget Forum would still likely be a part of the allocation process for other clubs.

The qualifications that would allow a group to receive funds not subject to the hostile amendments of the Forum will be one of the issues that Cannan would like the coalition to discuss. However, she indicated that the educational events of affinity groups ought to be among those funded separately, because diversity is one of the core values of the College. A group of over twenty students from affinity clubs met with Cannan to discuss this issue, and they have already submitted a proposal to overhaul the allocation process. The Anti-Racist Dialogue (ARD), which composed the proposal, declined to submit it to the public record. Noah Odabashian, a representative of the club, released this statement to the Observer: "It [the proposal] has not yet reached a point in its maturity where it would be worth reporting on. We are in talks with the administration to reevaluate the College's commitment and support of diversity; one aspect of that is the funding of affinity groups. We will issue a release as soon as something materializes from these talks."

However, in an email interview with the *Observer*, the ARD did offer some insight into their proposed reforms. The ARD seemed to disagree somewhat with Cannan's view of the qualifications for being exempt from the usual budgetary process. Whereas Cannan intimated that publications might be among those included, the ARD rejected this idea: "It is an option to be a writer for a newspaper on campus. They have the option of not writing anymore; could the same be said about members of affinity groups? No." It is the position of the ARD that the College ought to "institutionalize the funding of affinity groups," to show its commitment to diversity.

Cannan said that the "combative" atmosphere of Budget Forum has been at a "low-grade fever" for a long time and has been an ongoing concern. Because the College collects the student activity fee, she says, it "takes responsibility for the manner in which those funds are allotted" by the Planning Committee. Budget Forum, known for its hostile amendments and free alcohol, is, according to Cannan, often a site of "hurtful" and even sometimes "racist" debate. She cited the distribution of alcohol as one factor that contributes to the hostile environment and suggested that alcohol ought not to be served at the Forum.

While underage drinking is an understood reality for most Forum attendees, the legal issue of a "hostile environment" may be less familiar. There



are varying definitions of what constitutes a hostile environment, but it is usually defined as an intimidating environment that hinders the capacity of a person to take part in or realize benefits of an institutional activity or resource; such codes typically relate to the workplace and institutions of higher learning and have tended to be applied to cases of sexual harassment and racial or sexual discrimination. ARD described in an email how Budget Forum constituted a uniquely hostile environment for affinity clubs: "Some students, unfortunately, do not see members of affinity groups as

Any club that is not directly entertaining is at risk of losing a drunken rowdy crowd

-ARD

having voices that come from spaces that are worth knowing about. That is a fact before Budget Forum enters the equation. Add alcohol and procrastination and you get a mob mentality that essentially just wants to be entertained. Any club that is not directly entertaining is at risk of losing a drunken rowdy crowd."

For its part, the Student Government Association responded quickly to the administration's proposed intervention in the allocation process. The Secretary of the Central Committee, Oliver Traldi, announced in an e-mail to the student body that allocation reform would be the March 12, 2008 Forum's main agenda item, and Forum attendees spent over two hours discussing ways to improve it. The Forum resolved that the student activities fee be raised in some fashion to accommodate the increase in clubs and clubs budgets, and two proposals will be presented to the Board of Trustees. The Forum also discussed constitutional amendment proposals that would make the allocation process more transparent; these included the institution of an "observer system," which at the very least would allow clubs to be privy to Budget Defense discussions and have some influence on the amendment

process. Most of those present at the Forum agreed that alcohol ought not to be a part of the budgetary process, and some suggested that instead of distributing alcohol at Budget Forum that an after-party be held.

Student government has continued to host weekly constitutional reform discussions and plans to hold a constitutional convention at the end of the semester. The ARD, which did not attend the Forum discussion and seemed less willing to work with student government and more in favor of the administration's increased role in the process, said: "Oliver Traldi has done a lot of hard work, but he is a staunch constitutionalist, adhering to a faulty constitution at that. This is like dealing with a stick in the mud. Progress needs change and those unwilling to do so [Student Government] will be left out of the conversation."

Traldi indicated to those members of affinity groups present at the Forum that it was his preference to work with them to reach an agreement that does not involve the administration's intervention in the allocation process. He also released this statement to the Observer: "Firstly, members of the administration and the Anti-Racist Dialogue alike seem to be under the impression that there is a simple and necessary contradiction between democracy and diversity. I don't believe any evidence in the history of Budget Forum bears that out. Secondly, the Student Association, which includes every Bard undergraduate, has also begun formulating a plan to address issues of transparency and fairness within budgeting procedures. We welcome members of any club or organization to join us in our work and we welcome feedback from administration."

As this article goes to press, it is not clear whether the three parties—administration, student government, and the affinity groups—will be able to reconcile the differences between their respective plans to reform the allocation process. It seems certain that a change will occur, but the success and level of agreement among the interested groups remains to be seen.

## bard students respond to russian election



Illustration/Walker Schiff

Matusevich's concerns are held by others in the international community as well. Through spokesman Thomas Steg, German Chancellor Angela Merkel noted that, "during the election campaign, there were incidents and situations which caused us to determine that democratic and constitutional principles weren't permanently complied with."

Under Putin, the Russian federal government has expanded its powers considerably. The Kremlin's control of most media, and its frequent intimidation and exclusion of opposition parties has led many to declare Putin an autocrat.

Indeed, many high-profile candidates' applications to run were dismissed by the Central Election Committee for reasons varying from bureaucratic "mistakes" to the Committee's belief that endorsement signatures were forged.

Yet, legitimacy questions aside, few doubt that current president and soon-to-be Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's previous endorsement of Medvedev was sufficient to guarantee victory. In fact, Medvedev is a relatively unknown personality to most Russians.

About Medvedev, Anastasia Aleeva, a Smolny exchange student currently here at Bard, says she has "no idea about his personality." Matusevich, similarly states, "I don't think anyone has a perception of Medvedev as a person. He's kind of respected in world business and is perceived as more free market oriented than Putin" but quickly describes these thoughts as "pure

speculation."

Still, it seems that for most Russians, a Putin endorsement is enough. This is likely because, prior to anointing Medvedev as his successor, Putin declared plans to assume the role of Prime Minister upon the expiration of his second presidential term. The Russian constitution, like America's, only allows a president two terms. Thus, Putin's decision to switch titles answered many questions about how the former KGB agent would retain power, post-presidency.

Putin has enjoyed for some time now an approval rating above 80%, and has become increasingly infamous in the West for his autocratic tendencies. This has raised some questions as to how much power sharing will truly occur between the former and future president in the next administration. "[Medvedev] owes his whole career to Putin," says Matusevich.

Aleeva is equally skeptical of Medvedev as anything more than a Putin proxy. "I'm sure that he will continue Putin's way of solving problems," she says, "because otherwise he would never be chosen as his successor."

But it may not be so simple. When Putin was first chosen as President, many saw him as little more than a puppet for former president Boris Yeltsin, a perception now almost laughable.

"The president has a lot of power in the Russian constitution now," says Matusevich. "Only time can tell if something actually changes." Medvedev's first term begins May 7.





# observer

## local food at bard: an update

By TAMSIN FLANDERS

Here at college in upstate New York we are lucky to be surrounded by small, owner-operated farms. Getting to taste some of the food grown around us should be easy, right? For those who feel strongly about food politics, or who are keeping tabs on our southerly neighbor Vassar College, Bard is a disappointment when it comes to feeding students local food. Vassar established their farm-to-school program in 2002, which expanded this year to include some frozen food sourced locally and packaged in a new production facility in New Paltz called Hudson Valley Foodworks. Vassar also hosts a weekly community farmer's market featuring twenty-odd vendors and has their own CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture), the Poughkeepsie Farm Project.

Foregoing any discussion about the merits of local food, this investigation will discuss the possibility of local food, the barriers, and to what extent Bard has provided students with a taste of local. Chas Cerulli is the director of dining services with Chartwells, the food service provider contracted by Bard. Chartwells is a subsidiary company of Compass that provides higher education dining services for 600 schools nationwide. Chas says that his interest in local food was motivated by student requests, some before our time, but most strongly in the past four years. When the topic of local food first came up, Chartwells was limited in its purchasing, both ideologically and in its policy, by national corporate structure. When I started asking questions three falls ago, it was the very first year we had local apples.



Local farmers pose in Kline during this year's Farmer Appreciation Day.

The barriers Chartwells corporate standards posed to purchasing local a few years ago seemed insurmountable. Currently, Chartwells sources its food from five or six large food distributors, in order to simplify what would otherwise be an impossibly complicated purchasing process. The questions the prospect of local posed were many. How could it maintain separate accounts with twelve different small farmers? How would these farmers be able to make deliveries in an already busy day? And how could the farmers ensure a regular delivery that would guarantee enough produce to provide 3,300 meals a day? The reality of a family farm harvest is that farmers naturally cannot guarantee a constant supply of produce on the scale that Chartwells needs to feed Bard College.

At a Cornell Cooperative Extension-sponsored Farm-to-School meeting in Red Hook in the spring of 2006, the incompatibility between the needs of a food service corporation and the capabilities of a small farm operation left a room full of Dutchess and Columbia County farmers and food-service providers discouraged. What was needed, it seemed, was a local produce distributor. A distributor of this kind called Northeast Coop based out of Massachusetts had provided such services years ago before it was driven out of business by United Natural Foods. No farmer in the room had time to take such a project on again. Chartwells currently receives its produce from two distributors out of New York City, Baldor and Riviera. In the last six months both companies

have started providing locally-grown products as an option. But for us already in the Hudson Valley, what good is it if the food grown around us is shipped south in order to be shipped north again? And even if these obstacles weren't there, most of the growing season happens when we are not in school. Facts are facts.

The local food you see in Kline today thankfully doesn't come from Baldor or Riviera, but from a series of local partnerships Chartwells has formed over the last three years. The first of these was a creative deal worked out with a local farmer named Chuck Abraham from Old Saw Mill Orchard in Germantown—you may recognize him as the guy who has come to ladle our cider in the servery in fall semesters past. Chuck Abraham coordinates the purchasing, pick up, **CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX**

## mens rugby: new season, new coach



The Men's Rugby Club, shown here in a team huddle, plans to work smarter, not harder.

By ALEX ERIKSEN

The Men's Bard Rugby Football Club began their winter training with Brian Wolf, new head coach of the club. Wolf is stepping in for John Nador, who after two years as head coach agreed with BRFC President, Joe Forsyth, to take time off. "Unfortunately John never actually moved beyond Bard rugby. He doesn't have any coaching or playing experience besides at Bard and maybe a few men's clubs here and there" said Forsyth. The decision for a new coach came as the fall 2007 season ended with a record of 0-5. For Bard Rugby, the plan is to work smarter, not harder this season, and Wolf may be the man to make it a reality.

"We wanted a coach who was more rugby-specific, one that could teach us more about the sport" said Forsyth. "Last season we felt we were just a bunch of guys going out with our heads cut off; we didn't know how to play the game. That's the reason we made the decision we did." The team began a four-day-clinic February 20, occupying the Stevenson Gymnasium's basketball court. The clinic concentrated on fundamentals as well as play-making and coordination. "My plan for the team involves raising the rugby I.Q." said Wolf. "I don't feel like I'm coaching or making people do anything for me-- they're in it for themselves. I want to offer guidance with the knowledge I've built from my experience, the rest is up to the players."

Nador won't be completely out of the picture this season. Rumor has it he plans to remain involved as a player's coach for weight training and conditioning. "He always helps out the team, he's a very important part of the rugby club at Bard in that he's always been around offering his help. He's great for the club" said Wolf. Nador could not be reached for comment.

Wolf, a Bard alumnus, graduated in 2005 with a major in music but went abroad to play and eventually coach Rugby after playing with the BRFC. Abroad he played with a Men's Rugby club in New Zealand. After one season, to continue playing, he traveled to Fiji on the advice of a local Fijian. Wolf arrived in Nadi, Fiji without knowing anyone but soon found himself training with a local Rugby 7s club. Following a season in Fiji he returned to New Zealand for the beginning of the 15s season. There, a friend recommended him to an Englishman who was the president of a Rugby club in Calcutta, India. Wolf traveled there at the Englishman's invitation and began playing and coaching with him. The team was involved with a number of charities and through an orphanage, Wolf began to train and put together teams of orphans. "Rugby is a big program for them. It's hard to get into the soccer leagues because of the caste system but there are a lot of rugby teams,"

said Wolf. Wolf would take his orphanage team and coach them for a month's tour of matches in France in conjunction with the Rugby World Cup. Afterwards, he returned to the United States where he was contacted by Forsyth for his interest in coaching at Bard.

Wolf's plan for the BRFC moves away from brute force tactics and towards quick thinking and movement. "I think he's the perfect person to be our coach right now given our situation," said senior Blaine Keller. The situation is more than just the scoreboard problems the team has had in the past. They suffer from a lack of larger and heavier players; making 80 minutes against a team twice their size a grueling task. The team also plays with only an A line, meaning they can't afford injuries and every man typically plays for the entire match. To counter these problems, Wolf and Forsyth are focusing on better communication, ball handling, and technique. "Now we're going to play a smarter game, make the bigger guys on the other teams run harder and get out of breath so they won't be able to play that crash game they've been running over Bard with," said Keller.

The team however also suffers from a number of long-standing difficulties outside the control of player performance or coaching. The Seth Goldfine memorial field, located behind Kline Commons, where the team practices, is not regulation size and so official games cannot be held there. With no home field, the team has been forced to hold matches on a pitch at nearby Red Hook High School. At such a distance, the bleachers of those games have seen more relatives and personal friends than Bard students looking to support their team. The poor attendance is an issue of morale the team takes seriously. "A lot of young players, new players, don't know what it's like to play in front of a crowd. It's a spectator sport and it helps a lot when people are there to cheer you on," said Forsyth. He hopes to communicate with other sports clubs and raise funds to show administration their commitment and need for a home field. Then either the Seth Goldfine field could be extended to regulation size or a new field could be built on campus. The Seth Goldfine field is also used for large outdoor functions, such as graduation, leaving the field in poor condition. Goldfine, the Rugby team's founder, died in a car crash in February

1998 while driving to see a Bard rugby game as an alumnus.

The team also has the reputation within the student body as being a fraternity. "The big problem with that is that people don't realize we are a sport on campus, a major sport, and that we work hard" said Forsyth. "Guys come out and practice 4 days a week and play a grueling game. We all work hard and sometimes people don't realize that so we don't always get the proper respect as student athletes that I feel we deserve." The sport attracts a certain type of person, says Forsyth, one interested in full contact sport and demanding physical conditions. The strong bonds formed between players are a result of their shared experience. "As far as the fraternity aspect goes yes we are an egalitarian brotherhood. Except you pay with your blood, sweat and tears instead of dollars. It's a social network as it is an athletic one" said Keller.

The team has also earned the fraternity stereotype of being heavy drinkers. "Drinking is part of the international rugby culture, we don't officially endorse it as a team, but this is a college campus, kids learned how to drink before they ever got here. I don't think it's indicative of any social maladies that have to do with the team," said Keller. Forsyth is concerned that such labels hurt the team's credibility and morale. "I think we do end up as a kind of scapegoat for all the negative things associated with substance abuse on campus. People only see the social side, not the athletic when they think of the team, it makes me feel disrespected and it's unfair," said Forsyth.

Wolf feels the negative reputation comes from misinformation. "The fact that we don't recruit, that Bard students come to us and we make them into a rugby team, that's the true essence of it. It's a club, its guys who feel like they get something from playing rugby. It's not like other sports at Bard where you have a team and then go out and find people to play on your team. Rather with rugby it's a student club for guys who want the opportunity to do something physical, to play, or they like the social aspect or just the game. I hope other students realize that," said Wolf. He also hopes to involve the team in local community service and volunteering. The team will play its first game at Red Hook High School against Molloy College on April 13.





About two weeks ago the Root Cellar suffered a collapsed ceiling in the 'zine room. Tiles, wires, light fixtures and metal beams protruded from the gaping hole that took up roughly one third of the ceiling. B&G fixed the ceiling two days after being notified. The Root Cellar is up and running again--open every day from 12 to 2.



The Tremblay basement has been a longtime problem for residents. Besides a new, strangely pristine laundry room, it remains wet and dirty and generally seems to be inhabited by monsters. Exposed pipes and wires line the walls and most of the floor is frequently taken up by a large puddle.

## DISREPAIR AT BARD



Photos by Ben Wlody and Kendra Schirmer  
Text by Jeremy Novak



Half of the Old Gym basement is occupied by the Bike Co-op and Aramark offices. Further into the Bike Co-op, there are increasingly exposed pipes and wires in the ceiling, especially in the bathroom, though it is still functioning. The other half of the Old Gym basement has been condemned for several years. The closing of this area dates back to a mattress that was set on fire on the floor of the Old Gym, causing structural damage and leading to an inspection by the fire marshal, after which many sections were deemed unsafe.



Blithewood Barn was once briefly considered as a potential location for a new student space. It would allegedly cost more to renovate than to demolish it and build a new barn.





Photo/creative commons/Flickr

# looking up at the sky this week: contrails

WITH AARON AHLSTROM

Often it feels like the sky lives far away from us. It appears to be another world, an untouchable realm so distant and removed that we imagine it inhabited only by gods and the deceased. Humans, though, have learned the ways of flight and now visit the sky on a daily basis. In fact, we have created our own type of cloud in the past century. The history of humanity’s cloud began one hundred and five years ago when the Wright Brothers got themselves airborne. Nowadays the linear markings of jetliners, known as contrails, grace the sky almost everyday. The word ‘contrail’ is a mashing together of ‘condensation trail’ which unimaginatively refers to the formation process of these white lines in the sky. It’s almost impossible to miss contrails’ distinct striations and most of us have sat miles high sipping Coke and eating peanuts while our airplane spews out a lonely cloud column. But why would jet planes make clouds? Do they have secret compartments where a

team of gremlins mix potions and pour noxious fumes out the back? Actually, jets produce clouds in a rather conventional way. When describing how clouds form, it’s easy to compare it to what happens to warm breath on a cold night. The case of contrails is no different. Those whirling engines release hot exhaust into air that’s below -25° F. Tiny particles in the exhaust fumes adhere to moisture and crystallize while water droplets formed in the jet’s combustion process immediately freeze in the frigid atmosphere, carving out a visible flight path. Essentially the same thing occurs when we see our exhalations during winter. Hot air mixes with colder air which then becomes saturated and visible. Water formerly floating invisibly around in warmer air condenses into tenuous strips. Like someone underlining a blank page, airplanes haphazardly emit contrails across the sky, adding humanity’s voice to the chorus of the sky.

Just like all other clouds, contrails can also signify important developments in the weather. You might have noticed that planes don’t always manufacture contrails. Sometimes they shoot cleanly through a clear blue sky, dragging behind a quickly evaporating white tail. Other times, though, a contrail can hover around for hours like a ghostly testament of people’s travels. According to a study by the University of Wisconsin, “how long a contrail remains intact, depends on the humidity structure and winds of the upper troposphere. If the atmosphere is near saturation, the contrail may exist for sometime.” In English this means that contrails grow more stubborn the wetter the environment is. If contrails refuse to leave and instead hang around with other clouds for awhile, then it’s likely that some meteorological change is imminent. A nice adage would be, “If contrails endure, the weather’s unsure,” or maybe, “If contrails stick in the sky, appreciate being dry.”

Your choice. While contrails can present a striking scene when illuminated at sunset, the meteorological world resounds with debates over them. Many resent humanity’s intrusion into the cloud world and cite contrails’ damaging effects. Not only do they physically represent pollution being expelled into the atmosphere, but they also affect temperature patterns on the ground. The exact changes wrought by contrails are uncertain. Increased cloud coverage both cools the surface by blocking the sun’s radiation and warms it by trapping in heat emanating from the earth. One study found that “The apparent reduction of the diurnal [daily] temperature range in the Midwestern USA during the last 50 years is partly attributed to the increase of contrails along the main flight corridors.” While contrails may please us aesthetically and possibly incite a little pride at our accomplishment, they also alter our environment in unknown and likely detrimental ways. Our entrance into the world of clouds, though exciting, involves increased responsibility and the need for a better understanding of our relationship with the sky.

# eating local

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FOUR

and delivery of fruit and vegetables from half a dozen other farms in Tivoli and in Columbia County, including cider, apples, pears, plums, cherries, tomatoes, winter squashes, mushrooms, kale, chard, carrots, and potatoes. Chas reports that the amount of local food purchased during the growing season this year increased 25 percent from last year. Many of these purchases are used for summer activities and L&T, when the growing season is at its peak. By the time we arrive at school, we get to taste the late season vegetables, more apples and pears than cherries and tomatoes. What has a shelf life though, may be around for a while; Chartwells served up its final batch of local beets, parsnips, and potatoes in the first week of December last semester.

And if anyone had any doubts that Chartwells could make a local meal in the middle of the winter, they should have been in the Stevenson Gymnasium on February 1st when Chartwells fed 300 people a no-waste, mostly local food lunch as part of Focus the Nation. On the menu was chili and potato soup in bread bowls, coleslaw, beet salad, and apple cider. It was delicious.

Three years into this initiative, local at Bard means more than produce. The tub ice cream is usually Sinon’s Ice cream from Salt Point, and in the Green Onion you can find Bora Bora Juice from Highland and Square Bites snacks from Poughkeepsie (these are obviously locally manufactured rather than grown). Much of the Bread in Kline comes from Bread Alone in Rhinebeck/Woodstock or Formasano in Saugerties. Some apples and cider comes from Stone Ridge Farms across the river. From time to time, most commonly in Manor, Chartwells serves grass-fed meat from Prospect Hill Farm in Pine Plains. Last spring Chartwells started filling the milk dispensers with milk from Hudson Valley Fresh, a Dutchess County dairy cooperative. Although the price of Hudson Valley Fresh milk is \$1.09 more per gallon, Chartwells has felt it worthwhile to assume the added cost. Following Bard’s precedent, SUNY Albany recently signed a deal with Hudson Valley Fresh for all dining halls. Chartwells nationwide has also pledged to purchase cage-free eggs only. Currently they come from Indiana.

As a fanatic locavore, I was discouraged from attempts to work with Chartwells on local food because of the obvious corporate problem, and also pretty well convinced that Chas has been working hard to bring as much local to the table as possible. This fall I decided to work on alternative options for students to

buy local and started a series of farmers markets in front of the campus center. For three Wednesdays, Montgomery Orchards (located a mile from campus down River Road) coordinated with Hearty Roots C.S.A. to sell fruit, honey, jam, and vegetables. Unfortunately, sales on the second and third Wednesdays weren’t good enough for the two farms to feel like it made the risk of moving produce and exposing it to the sun worthwhile. When it reopens in the summer, Wednesday will officially be made Bard discount day at the Montgomery Orchards’ farmstand on 9G. The farm is petitioning to have the shuttle stop at the stand on Wednesdays. If we are lucky enough to have the market come back to campus next fall, it will be because students, on and off campus, will start thinking about how to plan their meals with local food in mind.

Another alternative is to visit farmer’s markets in Hudson, Rhinebeck, and Hyde Park. Bard students who frequent the Rhinebeck Farmer’s Market can find mushrooms, honey, maple syrup, jams and spreads, pesto, yogurt, cider, candles, homemade pasta, wine, and venison and other game. And lest we forget about the Community Garden, I quote master gardener Paul Marienthal, “I grew more raspberries this year than Bard students could pick.” Every year the garden grows a variety of food, including out-of-the-ordinary vegetables like brussel sprouts, sungold tomatoes, purple beans, pattypan squash, curly cucumbers, and okra. You just have to get to them in time-- before other students, or before they get too big, like the banana-sized okra I found this fall. Also, one hundred new blueberry bushes to be planted this spring will be ready to for harvest this summer or the following summer.

The relevance of this article in the middle of winter is that spring is traditionally the time to start thinking about what one will eat in the coming year. If you have a partial meal plan or live off-campus now is the time to buy a local CSA share. Plenty of Bard kids have had a good experience with Hearty Roots in Tivoli, a CSA started by Bard alumni. A share—two to three grocery bags every two weeks—feeds 3 or 4 people who are cooking for themselves. Contact them now to ask if they have any shares available that start in September. There are also winter shares with three pick-ups in November and December. There are a number of other C.S.A.s in Columbia County which deserve to be tried as well. (see box page four)

## STUDENT SPACE SURVEY RESULTS

**Total Started Survey: 506**  
**Total Completed Survey: 466 (92.1%)**  
**Total Written Responses: 210 (41.5%)**

**Do you think there is a need to increase bookable, student-run spaces on Bard’s campus?**

**Yes - there is a very strong need 70.7%**  
**Yes - there is a moderate need 21.2%**  
**Neutral - this doesn’t affect me 5.3%**  
**No - there is no need 2.8 %**

**The Red Barn has been suggested as an INTERIM student space, to be used for the next FIVE YEARS until a more permanent space is built. Because this space is TEMPORARY, it will only be outfitted with temporary/movable architecture. Knowing this space will be temporary, do you support students accepting it as an interim solution?**

**Yes - I am excited about this opportunity 37%**  
**Yes - Not ideal but I'll settle for this solution 51.9%**  
**No - this is not a good solution 5.8%**  
**Other (explain) 5.8%**

**If the Red Barn is a 24-hour space, it will require student monitors to keep it open. Would you be willing to take a monitor shift through workstudy/SRG, similar to the shifts students work at the computer labs and late-night study space?**

**Yes - I would do this job 70.1%**  
**No - I would not do this job 28.7%**

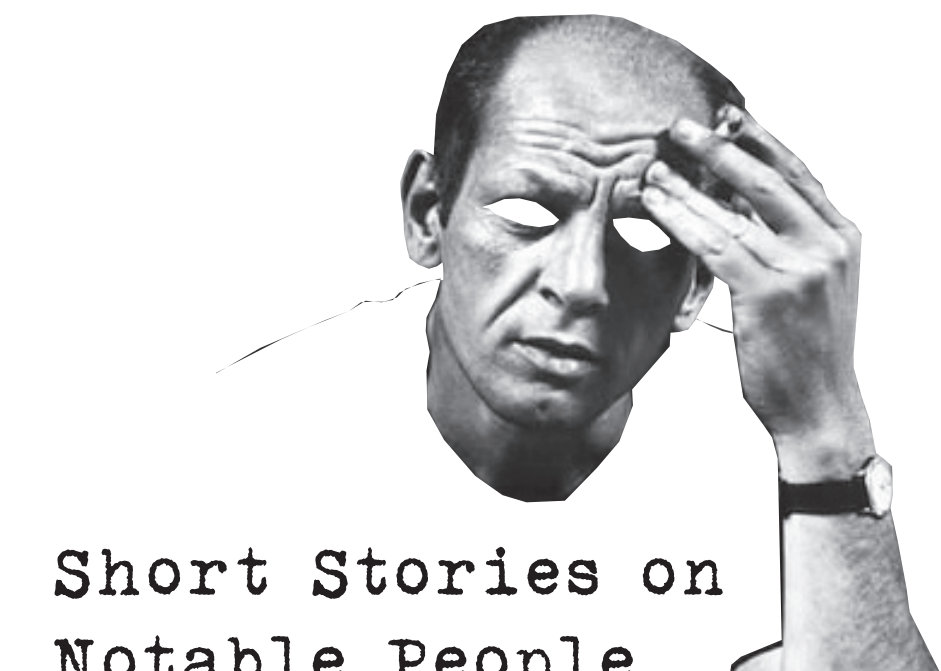
**Because the Red Barn is in a remote, low-traffic location on campus, some feel it is a dangerous area to be late at night. Would you support having a security post by the Red Barn to ensure the safety of students using the space?**

**Yes - I believe there is a need for security at the Red Barn 17.5%**  
**Yes - I would be fine with security being at the Red Barn 48.0%**

**If students could not distribute alcohol in the Red Barn, but could drink on the premises (such is the case with SMOG and the Root Cellar) would you still support it being used as a student space?**

**Absolutely 43.7%**  
**Yes, but I'd rather students were allowed to serve/distribute alcohol during events 51.7%**  
**No 2.8%**





# Short Stories on Notable People

By Jack Kerns

“I am not Jackson Pollock,” the narrator announces in the opening story’s first sentence from John Haskell’s *I am not Jackson Pollock*, a collection of short stories on notable people. The first sentence of another story, “The Judgment of Pyscho”, reads, “Janet Leigh was never completely naked during the filming of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Pyscho*, but she did have breasts.” Famous, ludicrous, mythical, notorious, notable people: their personality, to whatever degree, is necessarily subsumed. What makes them unique is dramatically overshadowed by their uniqueness. *I am not Jackson Pollock* is a collection of meditations on the humanity of these people whose humanity resides in a blind spot. Janet Leigh is conflated with her character in *Psycho*, and her humanity is presented in light of the Trojan War, *The Judgment of Paris*, a painting by Lucas Cranach, and *Girl Asleep at a Table*, a painting by Jan Vermeer. In “Elephant Feelings,” Haskell interpolates straightforward accounts of Topsy, an attraction at Coney Island around the turn of the century (who was an elephant), the Hottentot Venus, a kidnapped African woman who was shown off as an oddity in the early nineteenth-century in London, and Ganesha, a Hindu deity with the head of an elephant and the body of a male human being. I’m not giving anything away when I say that Topsy is executed for being who she was (a minute-long short film produced by Thomas Edison’s manufacturing company captured Topsy’s death by electric current), and that it all makes perfect, tragic, beautiful

sense.

*And it’s not that the devil is incapable of love. It’s just that what the devil calls “love,” we call “evil,” and we try to eradicate that evil. In The Exorcist they’ve tied the girl down and with their water and curses and crosses they’re trying to destroy a thing that just wants some kind of existence. But they don’t give the devil a choice. And the devil, naturally, is upset. It’s hard to think of the devil being scared but that’s why it spits out the thick green bile. To sicken the priests. To drive them away. And they are sickened. The old priest has a heart attack, the young priest starts hallucinating, and let’s say that Mercedes McCambridge is the devil.*

from “The Faces of Joan of Arc:”

If this sounds gimmicky, you’ve got the right idea. This is what gimmicks aspire to—what gimmicks want to be when they grow up. But John Haskell takes no shortcuts: he creates a wonderful reality for each icon. I am not Jackson Pollock resonates all the more deeply because we think we know the truth about Orson Welles, or about Laika, the first dog in space, but upon realizing we have no idea, we want these fictions to replace our preconceived notions.

Haskell cofounded the Huron Theater in Chicago where he performed his own writing; mp3s of selections of I am not Jackson Pollock are available at <http://johnhaskell.home.mindspring.com/sound.html>

# Real Chemistry

By Nick Scribner

It’s been three years since indie rock legend Stephen Malkmus graced his fans with a new album—the longest gap in the sixteen year Pavement/Malkmus epoch. But it appears that Malkmus has done more than just smoke pot and play with his second child during this time. Returning with the Jicks for his fourth post-Pavement album, *Real Emotional Trash* (Matador, 2008) is Malkmus’s most consistent and addictive release since the glory days of Pavement. Whereas 2003’s *Pig Lib* lacked cohesiveness and vigor, and 2005’s *Face the Truth* was a somber retreat from his trademark quirkiness, Real Emotional Trash marks a new—and better—direction in Malkmus’s disoriented solo career.

The Jicks are also returning with a reinvigorated sound, replacing drummer Joel Moen, now a full-time member of The Decemberists, with ex-Sleater-Kinney drummer Janet Weiss. Weiss brings a heavier rock n’ roll punch to the lineup, which was one of the many elements that The Jicks lacked on *Pig Lib*.

But the real focal point of this album is, of course, Stephen Malkmus. For once, his laid-back, neurotic vocals and spontaneous guitar solos never drag on tiresomely. The songs flow together like a tranquilizing series of psychedelic dreams, and the only discernable break in the flw is “Gardenia,” a three-minute, saccharine bubblegum



song to assuage the recent onslaught of indie twee-rockers.

The most defining component of this album is Malkmus’s enchanting guitar jams. His layered array of riffs and 1970s rock leads are reminiscent of Pavement’s Wovee Zovee, but with a heavier dose of psychedelic divergences. Malkmus and The Jicks sound more confident jamming together, with the band’s chemistry manifesting itself in psychedelic jams like “Baltimore.” The last track on the album, “Wicked Wanda,” is a hopeful glimpse into whatever lies ahead for Malkmus’s future musical career. In the end, *Real Emotional Trash* is a welcome return to 1970s guitar-heavy rock n’ roll, and is an album that will reveal itself further with each listen.

# The Evening Descends

By Charlotte Benbeniste

If The Evening Descends were a car, it’d be a Toyota Prius, the ultimate hybrid. Oklahoma quartet Evangelicals’ sophomore album successfully combines all the goods of a formidable iTunes library to create a theatrical, spacey, pop extravaganza. In an interview post-debut, Evangelical Josh Jones revealed he had hopes for the band’s second album to recall the Rocky Horror Picture Show. Mission accomplished, Josh, Descends could be the soundtrack to a Broadway reenactment of the flight to Neverland, starring Marc Bolan as Peter Pan.

Descends opens with its shadowy self-titled track that has trouble deciding whether to lull you asleep with its ghostly hums or act as a mid-song alarm clock blaring 80s Guitar Hero-worthy power chords, setting the tone for the rest of this dichotomous fairy-tale.

The Evening Descends is a lyrical Yo-Yo, alternating between cleverly playful quips between doctors and patients and dark and candid warnings of death and insanity. But Evangelicals artfully imbue extremes of both ends of the lyrical spectrum with musical touches from the

other end, to create a set of songs that are easy to swallow and lovely to savor.

Breezy pop jangle “Midnight Vignettes,” for example, pleads sincerely, “please don’t tell my mother, she wouldn’t want to know I’ve been goin’ crazy.” Listening to the first twenty seconds of “Skeleton Man,” I warn you, may result in serious confusion. “Is that Electrolane I hear? Perhaps some Rataat?” you may question while the album’s third track echoes the pounding drums of “To the East,” in its baseline and is sprinkled with the stretched electronic chords of “Lex.” The song is upbeat and airy and you’d most likely never guess that it sings of a black sheep looking for acceptance, or as Evangelicals sing it, “a stranger reaching out for your hand.”

If one song on this album epitomizes Jones’ desire for Zombie film drama, “Bellawood” is it. The song elicits flashbacks of the glam-rock ghoulies of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller,” video while Jones repeats “strange things keep happening all around my head, strange things keep happening” amidst tortured wails and 60s Drive-In Horror movie sound effects. The album quickly changes pace with highlight, “Paperback Suicides,” a carefree and simple jingle where “Forever” Beach Boys’ harmonies and Kim Gordon-like shouts intermingles.

From the beat of the drum to the layers of eerie drones, “Here in the Deadlights,” is almost an exact imitation of the intro to “Comfortably Numb.” “Bloodstream” closes out Descends with overwhelming harmonies that pre-Uxoricide Phil Spector would happily approve of.

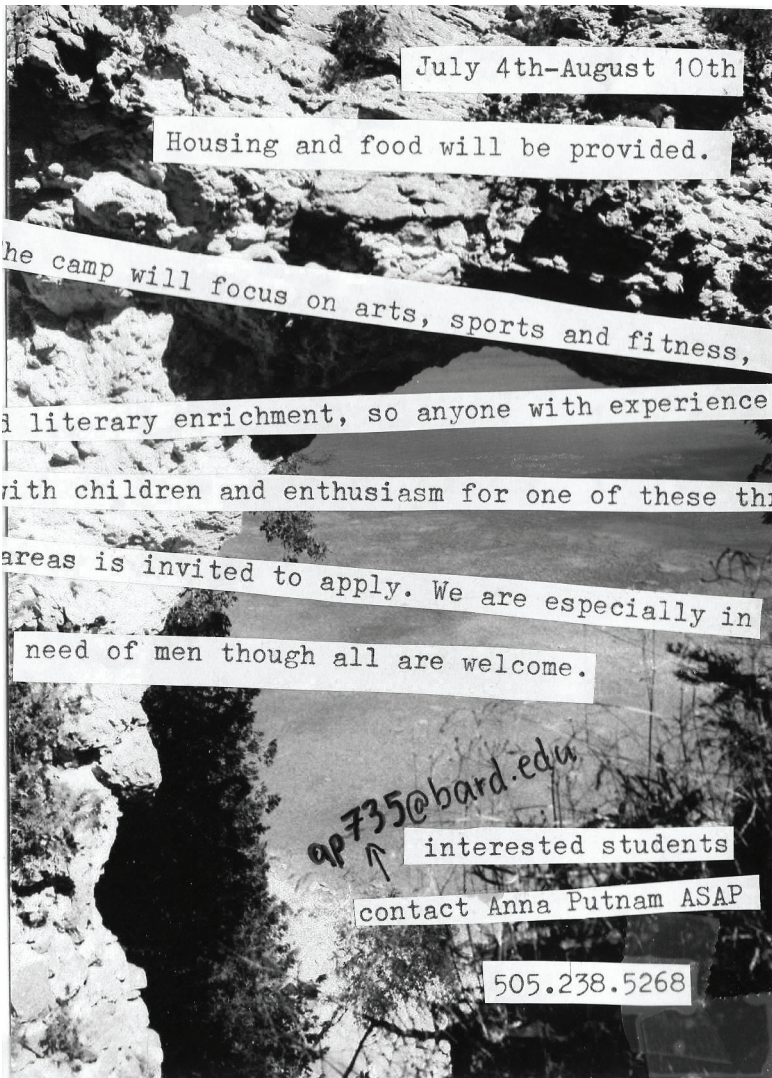
Two years after their debut, Evangelicals have still not quite found their own sound, but have certainly mastered combining everyone else’s, which ironically enough, has created a record that is dramatic and strange and dare I say it, quite unique.

# graeme reid

Continued from page two

is not surprising....This is precisely what defines democratic cultures; their order is not defined by nature, or by any other transcendence: God, tradition, culture, or religion.”

Graeme Reid’s lecture inspired various informed questions and reactions, not just about the South African experience but about the entire apparatus of politics, anthropology and queer theory.



THE NEW ORLEANS PROJECT, MEMBERS OF THE MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM, AND THE CHILDREN'S EXPRESSIVE ARTS PROJECT ARE COLLABORATING WITH THE NEW ORLEANS YMCA IN A SUMMER CAMP FOR CHILDREN. NEEDED: VOLUNTEER COUNSELORS IN NEW ORLEANS

• THIS SUMMER CAMP IS BUILDING ON OUR EXISTING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BROADMOOR NEIGHBORHOOD OF NEW ORLEANS, WHERE BARD STUDENTS HAVE BEEN CLOSELY INVOLVED WITH REBUILDING FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS. FOR VOLUNTEERS, THIS WILL BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN HANDS-ON TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE REVITALIZATION OF A NEIGHBORHOOD SEEKING TO OVERCOME THE AFTERMATH OF KATRINA.



# the new son: part 2

By Nick Ogonek

“So,” Peter asked, “Has anything come back yet?”

Fiona, leaning over the table to heap a second serving of linguine onto the amnesiac’s plate, knew Peter asked not out of rudeness but a kind of impatient caring. She could not really admonish him, though – she was just as curious and was grateful that he had steered the conversation in that direction instead of her.

“Not yet.” The boy smiled at Peter and then at her. Fiona had found some more band-aids and Neosporin for him after he took a shower. He looked a little better. He picked up the fork and looked at it. “This is nice silverware.” He quickly set it down.

Fiona wanted to try a more focused tack. “Do you remember something you were really good at or something you really liked doing? Maybe that’ll give you a clue.” She set the serving bowl down and slid back into her chair.

“Hmm . . . When I was taking a shower, I noticed that my feet were really gross.”

“Gross?”

“Yeah, there were blisters and,” he yawned, “calluses.”

“Hmm.” Peter said and got up from his chair, crossed to the desk in the corner and rummaged beneath stacks of bills and fliers, and found a notepad and a pencil. “What from?”

“What are you writing down?”

“The things you’re saying, so we don’t have to remember it all.”

The strange boy frowned. “Oh.” A darkness slid down behind his eyes. He looked down at the table and then at Peter. “Something where I used my feet a lot.”

“Do you remember how old you are?”

“How old do I look?”

Fiona had got up and began to clean up the kitchen from her cooking. Peter studied the strange boy. “Older than me, and I’m eleven.”

“Do you remember anything about school?” Fiona suggested from the sink.

“I already told you. I don’t remember anything.”

“You look about seventeen or eighteen.”

“Maybe I’m sixteen or twenty? Or thirteen?”

Fiona had turned from the sink and was leaning against the counter, facing the boys. Peter looked a little hurt. “You don’t look thirteen.”

“No. I’m sorry,” he turned to Fiona, “I’m sorry.”

“You look tired,” she said.

“I . . . you both have been so good to me,” his voice cracked and he looked at the uneaten plate of pasta in front of him. His eyelids sagged. Peter closed the notepad. He had written two lines. gross feet and don’t know age.

“You should go to sleep,” she said to the strange boy. It was 7:27. The sun had left the sky, but its color had not.

“Yes,” he said, the relief in his voice tangible.

While Peter worked on the kitchen, Fiona walked the stranger up to the guest room. He was gripping the banister as if dragging himself upstairs.

“Long day, huh?” she said.

“I was thinking, about my feet. I remember a wood floor, with a black mat over it. The mat was really . . . rubbery, and the floor was slippery.”

“What kind of shoes?”

“Thin-soled ones.”

Fiona and the boy thought for a minute. They were on the threshold of the bedroom. He turned the light on, the yellow light spreading over the darkened room. Fiona began to hope very much that he would stay with them. It was easy to imagine him staying, going to the same school as Peter did. They would have to make him take a test, to find out what grade he should be in. She could see him intriguing the girls and frustrating the boys. He was good looking in a vague, unconcerned sort of way. Did he have parents? she thought. Would they come looking for him? They should take him to the police tomorrow to see if anyone had reported him missing. And if they hadn’t? She could keep him, she decided, a new son. If they couldn’t help him remember his name, she would call him . . .

“I remember the sunlight,” he said looking at the dusty light-fixture he had just turned on, bringing her back to their conversation. “It was, like, afternoon light.

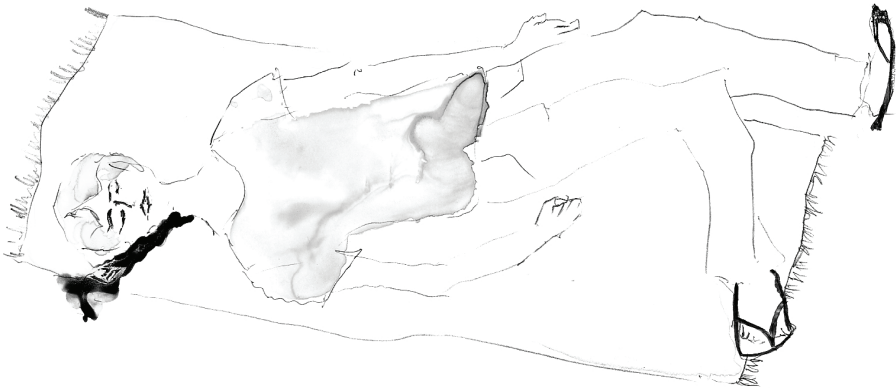


Illustration /Sofia de Guzman

Orangey-gold.” He brought his eyes down to hers.

“See you in the morning,” she said, and went downstairs.

Peter was pleased when Fiona told him the juicy new tidbits from the ascent to the strange boy’s room. He wrote them down right away on the notepad, forgetting to dry his hands of the dishwater. Suds stained the notepad and he wiped them off impatiently, smudging his writing. And later, after the kitchen had been bullied into something approaching tidiness, when she and Peter were sitting in the living room, reading (though she could tell that he was itching to watch TV), Fiona thought she might have figured something out. I wonder if he was a dancer, she thought, her eyes directed at but not focused on the book in front of her, absentmindedly stroking Pacha the cat. The blisters, the shoes. She thought about the floor. She had danced as a girl, and the wooden floors at the community center where she took classes were hard to get a good grip on, especially with the thin shoes you wore. Before class, the teachers unrolled a black mat over the floor which was easier to dance on. She got to class early most weeks. She would watch them. Was that what the boy meant? She was about to tell Peter but didn’t. She wanted to sleep on it.

That night she slept soundly, as she usually did, but was woken by a crash she thought came from the first floor. She had almost got the covers off and the bedside lamp on when she realized it was probably the cat. As always when this happened, she thought how does that tiny cat make so much noise. Turning over on to her other side, she was back asleep almost immediately.

In the morning, Fiona went downstairs. It was 8:30. She had to go to work in an hour, which gave her just enough time for

tea, toast and a shower. In her mind, she wrote a draft of the letter she would write the boys for when they woke up. She would put it on the kitchen table along with some money. Good morning! I’ll be back around 5:30 or 6:00. Feel free to eat anything in the house – there’s leftover pasta if you’d like it. The money is for groceries– Peter you know where to go. I’ll call at lunchtime to give you the list. Also, Peter – not too much TV . . . and then she saw a body stretched between the front door and the screen door. He was wearing her green T-Shirt and black pants, and his head was at an angle that seemed unnatural compared to the rest of his body. As she came closer, her feet like lead on the dusty floor, she saw that it really was him, the stranger. That he held tightly in his hand one of the canvas bags she had bought from a local library fundraiser. Some silverware, Peter’s Gameboy, and maybe ten loose twenty-dollar bills spilled from the bag. She wondered how he had found the money. She had hidden it so well, she thought, so secretly in the old cigar box beneath at the back of the pantry. A breeze shifted the bills, nudging them in little eddies around his face. In his other hand, he was gripping what looked like the keys to her car. He was wearing a pair of her flip-flops. They were much, much too big for her but they had been on the clearance rack at K-Mart. This was why she bought them – she wanted something to wear for when she gardened. They were too big for the boy, too. She guessed, with a slow coldness, that he had tripped over them while navigating between the two doors. Before he could get up, the door, which was very heavy and uneven on its hinges would have swung onto the back of his neck, she thought, would have broken it. She could see a drool of blood, already congealed, run from his mouth onto the ground.

# political ads heat up presidential race



By Elias Isquith

Hillary Clinton’s recent “Red Phone” political advertisement is the first of the 2008 presidential race to garner serious chitchat. In the ad, we see a normal suburban home in the dead of night (the narrator tells us it’s 3 A.M.), accompanied by seemingly endless close-up shots of slumbering, innocent white children. The narrator continues throughout, telling us that an important call is occurring in the world, and it is our vote that determines who in the White House will pick up the other end of the line. Someone who knows the world’s leaders, who has extensive experience—or someone who, we infer, just doesn’t. The ad ends with Senator Clinton, diligently taking notes and, we assume, answering calls, all under a subtle but wonky-looking desk-lamp.

Although the direct effect the ad had on Clinton’s victories in the Ohio and Texas primaries on March 4<sup>th</sup> is unclear—Mark Penn, the ad’s originator and Clinton’s

chief campaign strategist, insists there is a direct correlation—the commercial achieved at least one of its objectives, placing Senator Clinton’s message front-and-center in the media narrative.

That’s the paramount goal of a political advertisement, and the most successful and famous ads in history are those that have provided the voters with a phrase or image to immediately associate with a candidate. For Ronald Reagan’s 1984 reelection campaign, it was “Morning in America”; for Bill Clinton in 1992, it was “Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow” and the accompanying Fleetwod Mac song. It can also work to great effect as an attack against an opponent—Walter Mondale’s “Where’s the beef?” on primary opponent Gary Hart remains part of the pop-culture lexicon today, and was instrumental in ensuring he would be the Democrat humiliated by Reagan in ’84.

The most famous (or infamous) political commercial of all time is an attack ad, and it only ran once. Referred to as “Daisy” the ad was produced by Lyndon Johnson’s campaign during his 1964 contest with Barry Goldwater. “Daisy” is really the mother of all fear-mongering political ads, all the way to Clinton’s new “Red Phone.” In it, Americans saw a very young girl in a field of flowers, slowly and adorably ineptly plucking petals from a daisy while counting to 10. As she runs out of petals, the image freezes, zooms in on her eye, and an ominous, doomsday countdown begins. Suddenly the screen is full of mushroom clouds. “These are the stakes,” the narrator tells us, urging us to vote for Johnson—who says in the ad that “all God’s children” must learn to “love each other.” Watching it today, the ad is so heavy-handed I couldn’t help but laugh, but it should be noted that

Johnson won that election in one of the greatest landslides in American history.

Most ads, though, are boring and ineffective—especially those that don’t involve the implied murder of the voters’ children. For a candidate like Senator Clinton’s challenger, Senator Barack Obama, the political ad is an especially difficult task. Obama’s campaign is partially based on a rejection of such scare-tactics. That might be preferable in a moral sense, but it sure leads to some boring TV time. Inspirational piano in the background, a sunny day in a piece of America that is somehow both stereotypically rural and

urban, a procession of smiling, not-too-ugly-not-too-pretty faces, and maybe a bald eagle soaring for the conclusion. Yawn. Perhaps Obama’s refusal to manipulate Ohio and Texas voters’ more primal fears can explain the fact that, despite spending nearly three times as much as Senator Clinton on TV ads, he lost both contests.

If a candidate has a choice between fear and hope, the smart gambit—at least when it comes to political ads—seems to be fear. After all, if you’re afraid of the dark, you’re more likely to be awake, ready for that three A.M. phone call.

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# america is not too religious, it is too diverse

BY MIKE LEVINE

Both President Botstein and Chaplain Chilton looked cool, calm, and confident as they walked down the isle of the Olin auditorium. In just a few minutes, they would begin the first debate of a series hosted by the newly revived Bard Political Union. The format of the event was quite simple. The moderator began by announcing the resolution, and the audience voted on the validity of the statement. The resolution was short, simple, and controversial. America is too religious. Hands flew up in support of this resolution, and it is likely that over two-thirds of the audience supported the claim. The night followed with arguments by Botstein and Chilton, followed up by shorter statements by student panelists. The debate panel then had an open dialogue, which, towards the end of the debate, was opened up to the audience. Botstein and Chilton made their closing statements, and then the audience voted again. The final vote appeared to be more evenly split amongst both sides, but only two-thirds of the audience remained, so the vote may have been inaccurate.

Both sides presented rational arguments. President Botstein argued that religion should be a private matter, and should not enter the public realm. Like Immanuel Kant claims in What is Enlightenment and Henry David Thoreau in Civil Disobedience, Botstein maintained that while an individual is free to believe what they wish, they ultimately must follow the laws of government. If one wishes to reject the laws of their government and live by the laws of their faith, they must do so in civil disobedience, and accept the state's punishment. In his argument against religion-based government, he claimed that laws based in religion only adhere to certain practices and are extremely subjective, and that it is inherently unjust to subject a state to laws created by some unseen power.

The counterargument to Botstein's statement, while rational, seemed to sidestep around the issue at hand. Chaplain Chilton claimed that what Botstein labeled religion was actually fundamentalism and that the correct resolution would be that America is too fundamentalist. Fundamentalism, Chilton claims, "is the potato chip of American culture." Just because America has become fat does not mean we should

stop eating. Religion as a whole is not the problem; fundamentalism is the junk food America should cut out of its diet.

I was quite disappointed by Chilton's counterargument. It seemed that Chilton and his two student panelists were content with taking the defensive in the debate. Instead of attacking President Botstein's argument, Chilton chose to divert the claim from religion as a whole to a specific form of religion. Chilton appeared to merely want to take the pressure off of the Catholic Church, and used the Church's embarrassing younger cousin as the

In an ideal society, all the citizens would, by their own free will, hold the same religious, philosophical, and political beliefs.

scapegoat.

I pose an alternative to Chilton's counterargument. Botstein argues that religion is a private matter, and asserts that one is only free to practice their religion as long as it is in accordance with the laws of the government. However, this claim seems to question the integrity of the American government: who has given the government the right to set limits on our freedom of religion when they are supposed to be separate entities? I know I certainly did not.

Our government is inherently unjust because, unlike Locke's political society, we as citizens do not have a social contract with the government. We are born American and from the moment of our birth we are told we must accept the laws of the country. We can not choose to leave the American political state and form societies which better suit our needs. Here is where the problem lies, not in religion. Individuals would prefer to be a part of a political society in which the members share common beliefs and abide by laws of which they, as a collective, believe to be just. We are not part of a society that has been formed in such a way. Botstein claims that "we have the advantage of being heterogeneous," as opposed to the

homogeneous society that I described.

But is heterogeneity really an advantage? In America, there is a constant power struggle between political parties, religious groups, and intellectual circles. These sub-societies within American hold common beliefs and values, and strive to shape society in accordance with their views. Instead of working together to do what is best for the society as a whole, we find ourselves in petty arguments dealing with the value judgments that define our sub-societies. Conflict between these different groups is an intrinsic characteristic of our society; people desire to live in societies in which the law parallels their beliefs and, because the structure and nature of our country prevents this, each group fights for control over law. America is certainly not at an advantage because of being heterogeneous, and if anything, it is the source of most of our internal conflict.

In an ideal society, all the citizens would, by their own free will, hold the same religious, philosophical, and political beliefs. In this society, all laws would be just as they would be derived by the values and morals to which all members of the society subscribe. Of course atheists in a heterogeneous society would state that America is too religious; a society with some religion-based laws does not parallel their idea of the ideal society. If America was not too religious, conservatives would think it too liberal, capitalists would think it too socialist, immigrants would think it too nationalist; the list could go on and on. It is no surprise that the president of Bard College, the second most atheist school in the United States according to Princeton Review, would think that America is too religious.

While both speakers made convincing arguments, I agree with neither President Botstein nor Champlain Chilton. Religion is not the problem. It is the intrinsic injustice within our political society that makes religion appear to be a problem to the non-religious. There will always be a power struggle between ideological societies within America; compromise is our only option. Until then, we have debates such as this one to keep us entertained.



## campaign 08: when surrogates attack

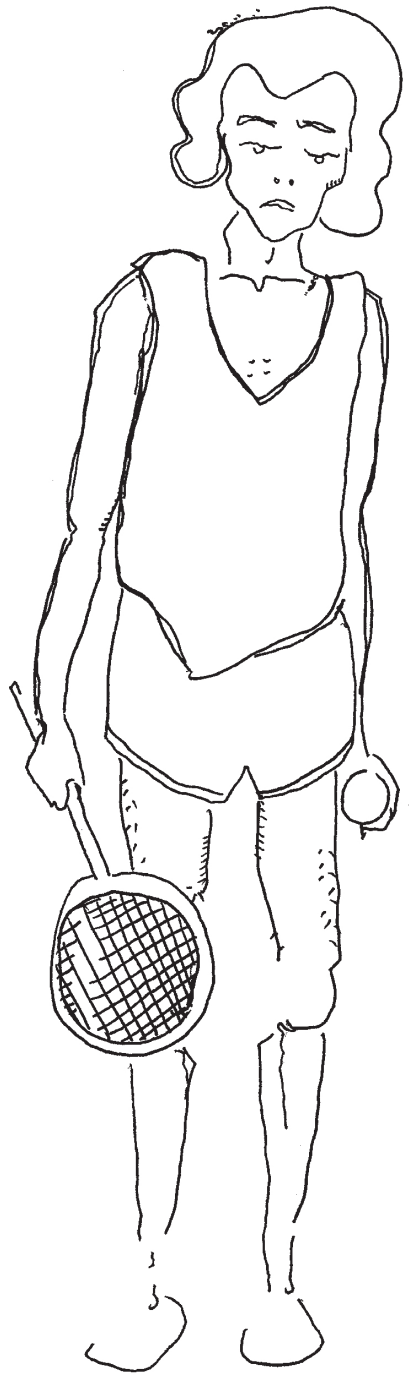
BY ELIAS ISQUITH

Senator Barack Obama won Mississippi Tuesday night, adding to his already substantial delegate lead over Senator Hillary Clinton. But, although every win in a primary contest as competitive as this one is valued, elections haven't been the story since Clinton's big wins in Texas and Ohio. Instead, the heated rhetoric emanating from advisors to the campaigns has inspired the most commentary. The hubbub began with Samantha Power, a Harvard professor, Pulitzer Prize winner, and now-former foreign policy advisor to Barack Obama, and her comments to a reporter from the UK paper The Scotsman. Although the interview was initially agreed to be off the record, at some point Power proclaimed Clinton to be "a monster" for her tactics in Ohio. Predictably, the comments were published; more predictably, the Clinton camp called for Power's "resignation" though she held no official position.

The speed in which Power acquiesced and bowed out was surprising. At a moment when many Obama supporters (myself included) were anxious for the Senator to show a little more bite, to place his "new politics" aside for some old fashioned toughness, the quick loss of a brilliant foreign policy mind—the type of thinker who would not have advised authorization of the Iraq war—was a disheartening sign. Obama's quick release of Power, coupled with Clinton's recent comments that Obama has not passed the "commander-in-chief threshold" appeared at first to be a deadly combination, possibly casting Obama as an overly intellectual pushover. And while there is an argument to be made that by sticking to his guns—continuing to run a campaign of high moral standards and thorough classiness—Obama impressed and comforted supporters and neutrals alike, I believe that the situation blew over more because of Clinton and an increasingly high-profile campaign fundraiser than anything else.

The most salacious news items Obama can—and has begun to—use to greater impact have been the recent comments from former Vice Presidential nominee Geraldine Ferrano, a Clinton supporter and fundraiser. Ferrano cast herself as yet another Clinton surrogate to bring race into the contest, saying that Obama's skin color is all there is to explain his success and that "if he was a woman (of any color), he would not be in this position," he added. "He happens to be very lucky to be who he is." Obama rightly called the comments "patently absurd," but his response proved to be premature—Ferrano had more to say. Ferrano recently added, now speaking about her first flap, "I really think they're attacking me because I'm white." I'm not sure who "they" are in the context of Ferrano's sentence, but I bet if we tried hard enough, we could guess. At first, although Power "resigned" nearly immediately after her brief, unintentional comment, Ferrano remained on-board the Clinton campaign for days. Long enough for the Senator herself to say that she disagreed with Ferrano, while making a point to claim attacks that "kind of veer off into the personal" have been an ailment of both candidates' campaigns. On Wednesday, Ferrano resigned, writing to Clinton that "the Obama campaign is attacking me to hurt you. I won't let that happen."

Considering how long and contentious this primary has become, I doubt this will be the last resignation we'll see.



# zizekian sparring

BY MYLES CURTIS

A daring group of young men can be spotted about campus, in a Literary Theory survey or an Introduction to Hegel class, at a Hitchcock screening or a two-page Observer spread. Likely one also finds them on Friday or Saturday among our own distinct beau monde, toasting and posing with the brightest lights of our generation's grand intellectual constellations. This is conjecture, however, for the author is an invalid who spends his weekend nights quietly reflecting upon his collection of melancholic objects (skulls, flames, mechanical birds, etc.). Thank God that such sickliness is on its way out, thanks to these remarkable athletes: The Men's Racquetball Tournament is in full swing!

These boys have never looked cuter, even when they break a sweat—a rare, sweet occasion! One marvels at the effortlessness of their unbreakable focus, their irrepressible pluck, their smooth, controlled lobbies, their dignified, powerful returns. It is fascinating to watch such unsurpassed dexterity from the bleachers. Who's on the bleachers? The ladies, of course! The ladies and the non-athletic gents, young men wasting away from extreme latency. (One fears they are incapable of producing an heir.) Their hope, however, is displayed in front of them: who would not be made potent from the sheer vigor and vim of these men? One is overwhelmed by the virility generated by their bandying about of the shuttlecock.

To think some gripemongers would

have these men restrict their activity to the court! These essence-sappers betray themselves in their own demands—for how could these men possibly restrict their activity when they are duty-bound to their boundless will, a will they can no more refuse than a full sail a mighty gust. Bandy these men were born to do and bandy they must! One never tires of the brow-furrowed deliberations that precede their games: what today, you Olympians in white shorts? The One-up? The Ironman? The Cuthroat? I squeeze my eyes closed and supplicate: The California! begs my private desire. The California it is! Oh, ecstasy! The players line up. The lady besides me is lost in a swoon.

A disturbing incident: seated in the shade, per doctor's order, I follow the volleys of two young men as they warm up. One man misses the ball (but only because he was waving to his passing paramour), and it lands by my feet. An undiscovered spontaneity seizes hold of my left arm. I fear heart failure and prepare my soul for the angelic fold. My reverie is interrupted: "Nice throw!" yells one of these young men. Against all odds, I seem to have thrown them back their errant rubber ball. They approach me—I feel my mouth go dry and send my attendant for some lime-aid. They eye a collection of books I have brought with me to read in between their vying; falsely intrigued, they invite me to play a round. "Good sirs!" is all I can say, and in a state of near delirium I make for home across the freshly-cut grass.



# spring 2008 budget fiasco

BY ROB ROSS

The student body is at risk of losing a considerable amount of power and authority. The unprofessional operation of the Planning Committee and the incoherently hysterical reaction of the Anti-Racist Discourse (ARD) club have put the student body in a position where it could lose control of part or all of the convocation fund. This would make it much harder for students to get funding for social events, for innovative club ideas, and would ultimately remove one of the things that makes Bard a unique institution.

Every semester, seventy dollars comes out of your tuition and goes into a special fund that the Planning Committee allocates to student organizations. After the Committee makes its allocation decisions, clubs can try to take money from one another at budget forum. If a club is still unhappy with the amount of money it has received, it can petition departments for funds. The Athletic Department funds most sports teams and academic departments fund some academic clubs. Also, clubs can always fundraise.

This system is unlike that of most institutions because at Bard, the students decide which activities to support, which activities are valuable to them, and which aren't. Here, funding decisions represent our communal values, rather than the stogy, capricious whim of a select few administrators (imagine Leon deciding which clubs get funding). At Drew University, students can't get money for kegs from the administration; they have to foot the bill themselves if they want to have a 'Manor'

type party.

While democratic, this system has some serious flaws. The Committee doesn't keep very good records of semesterly budget awards, nor does it keep records of what clubs actually spend their money as opposed to they say they will. The Committee does a horrible job of communicating with the student body; they don't post club's full budgets along with awards, making it very hard for club heads to decide whom to attack at budget forum. They don't publish the Committee's minutes, including which member voted for what cut. This time around, the Committee met even though half of the members were absent.

Worst of all, the Committee doesn't keep books, doesn't know how much money is actually in the fund, or how much they've spent of the \$100,000 surplus that was recently 'found'. The record situation is so bad that one recent graduate embezzled money from the fund, and other students covered it up because they were afraid of repercussions against the Student Association (no one on the committee now was involved). One wonders how anyone on the Committee ever thought that this was an appropriate way to disperse almost \$150,000 of student's money, or how this system would ever have passed an IRS audit.

This spring's budget process was rough on a lot of clubs. Half the Committee was missing and Secretary Oliver Traldi had to fill in. More clubs applied for budgets this semester than last, and most clubs asked for more this semester than they had been allotted last semester. 26 clubs

got less than half their minimum budget, and 39 got less than three quarters.

The convocation fund doesn't grow between the fall and the spring, so budget increases for some clubs need to be funded by reductions in funding for other clubs. But some clubs asked for larger increases than others. A close analysis of the budget printed in the last Observer shows that "affinity clubs" on average asked for a 74% increase in their fall '08 budgets (affinity = clubs purporting to be an organization of minority students; LSO, BSO, etc.). By comparison, non-affinity clubs that were more than two semesters old asked, on average, for a 26% increase from their fall '08 budgets. Had affinity clubs actually gotten their minimum budgets, these organizations would have gained 30% of the total convocation fund, 13% more than they were awarded last semester.

Of course, this is not to say that they didn't deserve the increase. Nor is it to say that they expected to get their minimum budget. Most clubs know that the hands far outnumber the dollars, and that they're lucky to get 50% of their minimum operating budget (My own club, the Bard Economists, got 13% of our minimum). In fact, the total minimum budget requests exceeded the convocation fund by 26%, or \$36,000. The ideals exceeded the fund by 66%.

One club, however, thought that they were entitled to a budget increase of 73%. They thought that their club was far more important than other clubs, and, when the Committee awarded them 15% of their minimum, they reacted

Allotments as % of Convocation Fund, Spring 08	
Old Affinity Groups	17%
New Clubs	4%
Old Clubs	49%
Publishing and Entertainment Clubs	25%
Not Clubs	5%
Checksum	100%
Net Change in Allotments, Fall 07 to Spring 08	
Old Affinity Groups	0%
New Clubs	-7%
Old Clubs	8%
Publishing and Entertainment Clubs	0%
Not Clubs	0%
% Requested Budget Increase Spring 08	
Old Affinity Groups	74%
New Clubs	100%
Old Clubs	10%
Publishing and Entertainment Clubs	10%
Not Clubs	0%
Net Minimum Requests as % of Convocation Fund	
Old Affinity Groups	30%
New Affinity Groups	1%
New Clubs	6%
Second Semester Clubs	4%
Old Clubs	52%
Publishing and Entertainment Clubs	28%
Not Clubs	5%
Sum	126%

with outrage. But instead of bringing their case to the student body at budget forum, they began a boycott of the entire budget selection process. This club was the ARD. Their hubris is succinctly summed up by ARD member Marika Plater's comment: "The Planning Committee cannot deny funds to the only resource on this campus for students of color." The Hindu Student's Organization might be surprised to learn that they are not a resource for students of color (FYI, they got a budget increase of 227%).

The ARD also insinuated that the students on the planning committee and at budget forum were prejudiced, or worse: "Affinity groups like A.R.D. must not have to defend their budgets in front of a Planning Committee made up of mostly white

CONTINUED TO PAGE ELEVEN

# nafta: who messed up?

BY CAROLINE FRIEDMAN

In this harsh climate of the primary season, candidates Obama and Clinton have recently been striking a much more populist tone in their rhetoric. Perhaps this is due to the perception that low-income, white voteRs are Clinton's stronghold, and Edwards, the populist dujour, dropped out of the race. Both candidates have been criticizing the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for a variety of reasons, including lax environmental and labor restrictions, and a loss of American jobs. But criticizing NAFTA in this fashion fails to address its greatest victims: farmers in the Mexican economy. Citing Americans as the primary victims of the bill is neglectful and irresponsible. While anti-globalization activists have been protesting against NAFTA from the get-go, and it is clear that it has had a deleterious effect on Mexico's rural poor, there are decisions the Mexican government has made that has exacerbated its problems, and there are steps that they could have taken to soften the harsh blow of freer trade.

NAFTA is the world's largest trading bloc in terms of combined GDP, even surpassing the EU. Its main purpose was to phase out the majority of trade tariffs over a fifteen year period. It was passed by the Senate in 1993, following the addition of environmental standards by Bill Clinton. Though it appears to act as a pact between three countries, in many cases agreements are only bilateral. For instance, the pact between the US and Mexico contains much wider agricultural liberalization than the US agreement with Canada. It has been largely successful in opening up trade between the countries: trade between the US and its two partners has increase by 130% since its signing.

Free trade has always been touted as a way to lower prices for (mostly American)

consumers. Others would argue that the benefits extend beyond consumers. Some claim that NAFTA has actually benefited the Mexican economy, citing its increase in per capita income. However, judging anything without delving into particular sectors has rarely been helpful, and obviously obscures reality in favor of pro-business interests. Surely, a few large farmers and transnational food corporations have benefited from liberalized trade with Mexico. but the Ginni coefficient (a number that represents inequality within a country) has steadily increased. NAFTA has had a mild impact on the US economy. Almost 900,000 domestic jobs have been lost, but it is hard to parse this out from other modes of outsourcing. It is around this fact that Obama and Clinton have coalesced, with Obama even offering tax incentives for "Patriot Companies". However, it is a superficial position to take because it completely ignores the horrible effects American agriculture is having on NAFTA and on Mexico. Neither candidate would want to touch with a ten foot pole for fear of alienating America's (miniscule) farming population.

The US government artificially lowers the prices of its main agricultural export, corn, by offering huge amounts of subsidies to mostly large farms that could not conceivably make a profit in a truly competitive market. In 2000, US subsidies to the corn sector alone were \$10.6 billion, which comes out to roughly ten times the entire Mexican agricultural budget. It's as if David and Goliath decided to call it a fair fight, no rocks allowed. This creates a situation in which US growers are able to sell each bushel for only 2/3s of what it cost to produce. It is these kinds of duplicitous, exploitative actions that undermine the true spirit of NAFTA.

While the US is certainly doing its fair

share to rob the Mexican economy of the comparative advantage that it might have in agricultural production, the Mexican government does not remain blameless. A fair assessment of NAFTA should criticize the Mexican government, even if that is less popular and less entertaining than bashing the US.

Mexico has more free trade agreements than any other country in the world. This is a clear recipe for export-led growth, as well as wage exploitation. This is a troubling policy, especially considering the World Bank's finding that greater economic openness is inversely related to income for the bottom 40% of a society. It is simply unacceptable that 81% of those living in rural areas in Mexico are impoverished, and that for farmers rates of poverty have increased by 10%.

NAFTA is only one example out of many of the Mexican government favoring corporate interests. Though Mexico has been heavily courting Foreign Direct Investment, only 0.3% of this investment has gone toward agriculture. What is has succeeded in is inviting corporations such as Campbell's, Hunt, Conagra, and Tyson's to increase their operations in Mexico.

The Mexican government was not surprised by the injurious effects its policies, and blind free-trade agreements, have had. They knew that growing corn would become completely untenable. However, they hoped with all their might that "inefficient" farmers would just find new

crops. But the government completely miscalculated the importance of corn in Mexican society. Corn has been grown in Mexico for thousands of years, and remains today as a symbol of its culture and history. Perhaps out of tradition, perhaps out of subsistence, corn accounts for 60% of the cultivated land in Mexico. How the government thought that this much agriculture could simply be shifted is outrageous. Beyond the cultural implications of corn, the lack of credit and technology that a rural farmer has access to makes it impossible to switch to more competitive crops at the drop of an Iron Hand. It has been shown that farmers with good quality land, access to credit, and government support have actually fared well under the agreement. But the Mexican government is not creating the conditions necessary for success.

One of the most egregious mistakes the Mexican government has made is its neglect of the allowed tariffs. Mexico was allowed to keep tariffs on corn trade until 2008, which would've provided a much longer period of adjustment for farmers. However, Mexico chose to drop corn tariffs as soon as NAFTA was passed. Instead of phasing out tariffs over fifteen years, it was done in 30 months. What was the hurry?

It is fair to say that the US and Mexico share equal responsibility in the squashing of Mexico's agricultural sector. The US has forever pursued unfair trade agreements, and many would consider their agricultural subsidies to be illegal. The US basks in the glow of its exploitative policies. No, wait, that is the glow of industrial waste. Subsidies are probably in the Top 5 worst policies of the United States, no kidding. However, it would be a mistake to paint the Mexican government as an innocent victim. In a hasty and irresponsible attempt to modernize, the Mexican government has ignored its poorest sectors and exacerbated its problems. What clearly needs to be done to create equal advantages from NAFTA is a reversal of US agricultural policy, a reprioritization of Mexican economic policy, as well as greater access to financial and government services to its citizens, and greater regulation by the WTO over subsidies.

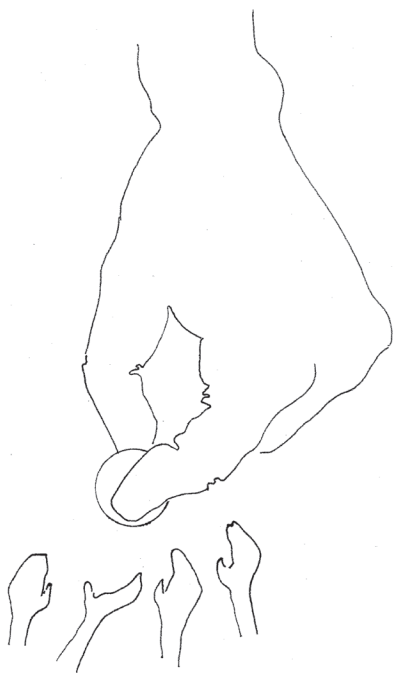
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# ard out of line

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TEN

students and at a Budget Forum of mostly drunk, mostly white students [emphasis added].” The reference to race is a cop-out—an insulting one at that. But it’s consistent, as far as I can tell, with this club’s other communications. Club head Carolyn Lazard told me on the phone that I could not attend an ARD meeting because “the ARD only admits students of color,” and emails stating “Friday’s workshop is for people of color” were sent out to members of the community. In fact, I was barred from attending that event. Thinly veiled accusations of racism, closed meetings and selective admittance are a troublesome pattern of behavior, and everyone at Bard should give it serious consideration.

The ARD has gone to the administration arguing that budget forum is a “hostile environment,” and that something needs to be done to correct the process (at \$2K plus, I wish someone were hostile to me). The administration is now considering, among other options, dedicating a portion of the fund to affinity groups. This, ARD argues, would eliminate the need for affinity clubs to compete for money.

In fact, the ARD’s argument is ignorant of the facts. The total percent of the convocation fund awarded to affinity groups this semester amounted to 17%, exactly the same as in fall ’08. ARD didn’t lose money to non-affinity clubs; they lost money to groups similar to themselves. In fact, the total convocation fund disbursement pattern did not significantly change from last semester. What did happen was that the ARD didn’t get the massive increase in their budget they wanted. This would have happened even if the fund were partitioned. Incidentally, ARD was the biggest winner at budget forum, gaining \$2,350. At the end of the day, they actually increased their budget by 5%. That’s more than a lot of clubs can say.

This debate is not about the value of affinity groups. They are valuable, and nobody argues that. This is a debate about who gets to decide how the student activity fee is spent: the students or the administration. Be assured, it should be the former. I hope that Erin Canaan and the other administrators involved agree. Forcing an immovable partition would impede the student body’s ability to spend the fund as it sees fit, and putting part of the fund under administrative authority should be out of the question.

The community should be wary of the ARD. Not because they have proven themselves incapable of participating in rational public discourse, but because their rhetoric seems to toe the line. Racism has no place here. In the budget matter, ARD’s behavior has been juvenile, separatist, and in opposition to the spirit of community and cooperation makes Bard unique. The Committee needs a lot of work, but this is not the way to begin that process. At the end of the day, the ARD got the funds that they needed (per normal procedure, Erin gave them money to host their speaker), and the student body, both minority and majority, were left exposed. The community should not tolerate this kind of behavior... from anyone, regardless of race.

Or, at least, that’s my opinion.

# eliot spitzer’s fall from grace

## why eliot spitzer should not have resigned...

BY ENRICO PURITA

The most shocking part of the breaking news on New York Governor Eliot Spitzer’s involvement in a high-profile prostitution ring is not the prostitution aspect. Instead, it is the incredible speed at which the story broke. Spitzer apologized and resigned. For enemies and friends of Eliot Spitzer alike, this turn of events is pitiful because it displays the continued taboo nature of victimless crimes in this country.

Now, many people would probably agree that Eliot Spitzer was by no means a perfect governor. He was probably an improvement over George Pataki, but that’s not saying much. However, what makes his resignation irksome is the fact that it had nothing to do with his politics or policies.

By paying for prostitution, Eliot Spitzer did not falsely allocate taxpayer money, he did not infringe upon the rights of New Yorkers, and most importantly, he did not lie to his constituents. While our president may not have paid for prostitution (that we know of), he has done all the rest and yet he retains his post.

By hiring a prostitute, Spitzer wasn’t disregarding his duties as governor. The illegality of prostitution in the United States falls into the same category as illegal drugs and gambling. Because Spitzer was forced to submit to some arbitrary moral code propagated by the over-zealous religious voting populous, the man that was elected governor is now gone because he decided to pay for sex a couple times. Regardless, prostitution goes back to biblical times anyway. Yes, I’m talking to you, Mary Magdalene.

Some may argue that Spitzer infringed upon his duties as governor by not upholding the illegality of prostitution. What isn’t being addressed is that prostitution as a crime is a ridiculous concept to begin with.

I take issue with Spitzer on this one point. He obviously thought prostitution laws to be frivolous since he himself participated in the act. So, why then, does he not defend his values rather than conforming to his voting populous by doing the “righteous thing?”

Spitzer should have come out and said, “Yeah, I paid for a prostitute, so what?” Instead, he offered a seemingly insincere



Illustration/Walker Schiff

## ...and why his detractors should not be happy

BY JASON MASTBAUM

I’m going to have to respectfully disagree with Enrico Purita about the nature of the Eliot Spitzer prostitution scandal. The issue here is not really the usual, “Politicians sleeping with prostitutes is going to degrade the morals of our society!” claptrap. In reality, the reason that a lot of people are happy to see the now former Governor Spitzer go down over this prostitution scandal is that he had previously been involved in prosecuting prostitution operations,

apology and resigned.

The false taboo against victimless crimes in this country will never be stopped if politicians don’t begin to stand up for their own personal values. Change does not happen through such submission and politicians along with their constituents have to realize that it’s the 21st century, and that scarlet letters along with the Protestant work ethic died with the 1800s.

This terrible trend of a politician’s personal life affecting his status in office has got to stop. No one needs to be reminded of the insanity of the Bill Clinton debacle that caused a good president to be remembered for the harmless blowjob he received

with all the moral-crusading zeal that he became famous for using against Wall Street. The nature of the outrage against Spitzer is not the type that was brought against Bill Clinton, but rather it is most akin to when gay-bashing politicians are outed; excluding homophobes, people are angry at their hypocrisy, not their homosexuality.

However, while there is a part of me that is among those who are glad to see the man that The New Individualist called the “Ayatollah General” back in 2005 get his comeuppance, what makes me very uncomfortable is how Spitzer got busted. I think that this is the real story here, and I think that it ought to make everyone else uncomfortable, too.

To try and keep things brief, there are federal banking laws under which, for example, a \$10,000 deposit at your bank will automatically generate a “suspicious activity” report for you. Apparently, Spitzer was trying to get his bank to split up some big-dollar transactions into smaller bits to try to avoid being flagged as “suspicious” under these laws. The banks, however, are also required by these laws to report the type of banking activity that Governor Spitzer was engaging in as “suspicious.”

I think that any American who is concerned about the ever-increasing surveillance society that is developing in this country ought to be very concerned by this obvious breach of privacy. Regardless of whether what has happened to Spitzer was spurred by political maneuvering or was simply a result of law enforcement, people need to realize that this can happen to them, too. There should not be laws that presume you to be guilty of a crime because you were handling more money at the bank than the government thinks is appropriate. Unless, of course, we are not actually a free country anymore.

in the Oval Office. Clinton’s critics argued that while Ronald Reagan never took his suit off while in the Oval Office, Bill Clinton couldn’t even keep his pants on. However, no one seemed to argue that a president could send troops to Iraq whether he was wearing a fancy Italian tie or nothing but tighty whiteys and slippers.

Now, there have been other ongoing investigations into Spitzer’s involvement with more serious corruption charges. This is what should be focused on. Instead, Eliot Spitzer will be remembered as the New York Governor that hired prostitutes. It’s a shame that the moral police are writing the history books.

# A note from the Editors: why bard take a stake in journalism

Many students complain that Bard is a bubble; at odds with the realities of the outside world. The editors of Bard publications then, are working from inside a double-walled bubble— isolated from both the college and the world at large.

Bard does not have a journalism department, nor does it offer any classes that could be strictly categorized as such. Perhaps the reasoning for such a gaping hole at a school teeming with writers and artists looking for an outlet is that journalism is regarded as a trade, and, in general, the college shies away from career-oriented pursuits. Yet there is a Conservatory program, where students devote the bulk of their undergraduate education to their prospective instruments in the hopes of making it in the music world. The same can be said for many dance majors, studio art majors, and film students.

The difference between such departments and journalism, many would argue, is that the former lie under the umbrella of “the arts”, while the latter is mere vocational training. Yet as anyone who’s ever written, photographed, or edited for a Bard publication can likely attest too, the creative and intellectual processes involved extend beyond the scope of the professional world. Whether or not one is looking towards a career in journalism, learning

how to conduct interviews, research an investigative article, write objectively, and practice good photojournalism, are skills that most students will use throughout their college careers and beyond.

That being said, the editors of the *Observer* are incredibly grateful for the high level of freedom and autonomy we have been granted. With a (more or less) guaranteed money source and complete control over how we spend it, each new group of *Observer* editors has the power to remake the paper to match their own ideals of what campus journalism should be. Additionally, various short-lived publications are constantly sprouting up to meet needs or goals not being met by existing publications. Journalism at Bard then, is entirely what the students of each class make of it.

While the *Observer* would be loath to give up the unique level of freedom granted us, we ask that the college offer more resources to further campus journalism not only for the *Observer* and other publications, but for the student body at large. There are several unpleasant side-effects of the separation between campus journalism and the college at large. For one thing, campus newspapers, even the long-standing *Observer*, have no permanent structure in place. Therefore, if a motivated group of students does not devote a large

amount of time and energy to organizing and recruiting at the beginning of each new school year, the paper is in danger of petering out.

Additionally, due to the time and energy it takes merely to keep campus newspapers afloat in the absence of any permanent structure to rely upon, coupled with the fast-paced nature of news reporting, there is little time for editors to pass their collective journalistic knowledge to writers and artists. Furthermore, most editors are almost as much in the dark about journalistic styles and methods as contributors. To ameliorate such holes in the journalism that is practiced every day at Bard, we ask that the college work towards developing a journalism program, which would host lectures, hold workshops, and offer classes.

With resources at our fingertips, campus newspapers could blossom into more effective and intelligent publications. It is certainly not a dearth of talent or interest which prevents such a transformation, but a lack of journalistic resources at the college. By distancing itself from the only journalism taking place on campus, the college hinders the potential academic and artistic growth of prospective artists, writers, and journalists.



# New Orleans

by Chloe Della Costa  
illustrations by Sofia de Guzman

Smile finally  
I could shake the  
Bothers of my place.

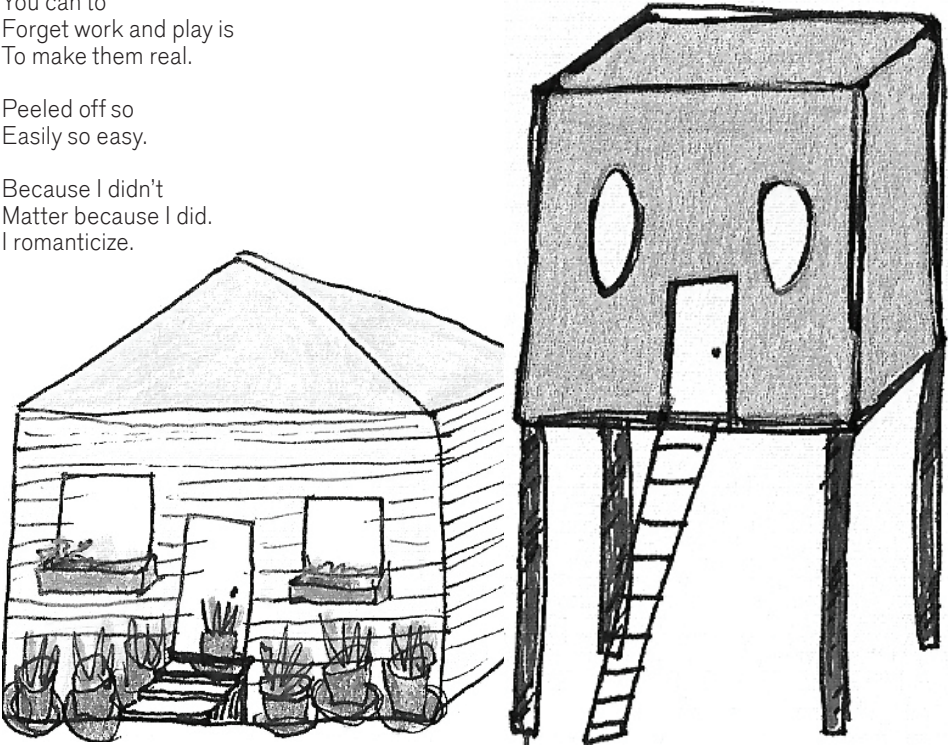
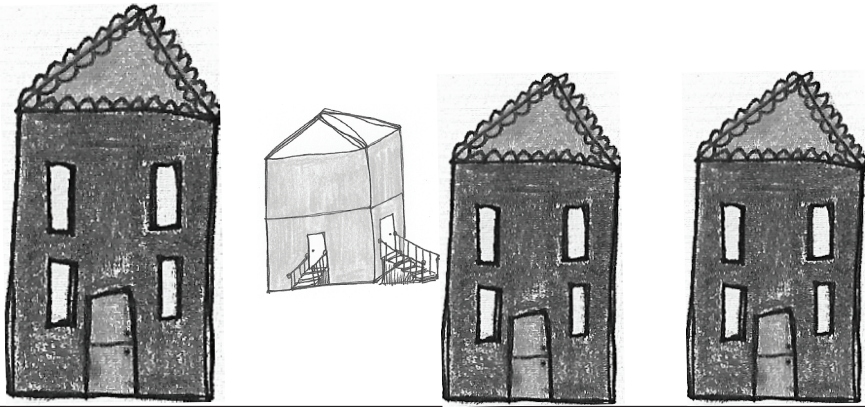
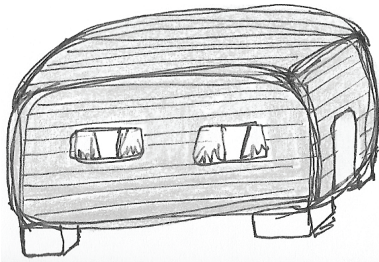
Fearlessness and  
Others and round  
Eyes that I held.

Us in  
Another state  
Fingers and coffee next  
To mold.

More real or  
fake a cliché:  
You can't understand you weren't there.  
You can to  
Forget work and play is  
To make them real.

Peeled off so  
Easily so easy.

Because I didn't  
Matter because I did.  
I romanticize.



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## SUPPORT THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN



FROM THE **ARCHIVES**

Vol. 4 No. 2 October 9, 1961

### slater [food services] slapped by student protest

BY RICHARD BROWN

8:30 a.m. – Coffee shop opens: Hostilities commence.  
9:06 – Freshman girl buys cup of coffee initiating general denunciation of finks and strikebreakers.  
10:03 – Mr. Asip closes coffee ship  
10:16 – Signs are posted encouraging students to boycott coffee shop.  
11:00 – Statement by leaders of boycott: “We, as students and members of this community refuse to be intimidated by what is obviously a desperation move on the part of Slater [Food] System in closing the coffee shop. We will continue our boycott of the coffee shop to support our principles and advise all students to do the same.”  
11:23 – Statement by Mr. Asip: “It was the administration that closed the coffee shop, not Slater System. We intend to keep it closed until the situation can be cleared up once and for all.”  
12:15 p.m. – Rebuttal by leaders of boycott: “We are not rabble rousers! Simply, we intend to use all sensible means of protest that are at our disposal. We assure the community that we will be mature and judicious in all of our actions.”  
1:05 – Leaders of boycott overturn food platters in Dining Commons.  
1:14 – Student waiters and waitresses clean up overturned platters and food.  
1:17 – Student waiter, asked for comment on protest while cleaning table: “No one told me about a protest, I thought they were just slob!”  
1:25 – Mr. Hoyt, asked for comment: “What protest?”  
2:06 – Sign-up chart posted in Hegeman

for those willing to drive students to Ann’s for snacks.  
2:30 – Student-run concession is established on lawn to protest unsanitary conditions in dining commons and coffee shop. For the first half hour, it is patronized chiefly by flies, ants and an occasional grasshopper. Eventually, its clientele expands to include several students.  
3:15 – The entire assemblage of student coffee shop (proprietors, patrons, and insects) mill around collectively abhorring the unsanitary conditions in Slater’s coffee shop (the customers are the least articulate, the expression of their indignation being somewhat stifled by stale bread and salami of dubious origin).  
4:00 – The sign-up chart in Hegeman has been up for just over two hours. One person has signed his name. It is for Tuesday at four o’clock and Friday at nine thirty.  
5:30 – Student Boycott committee posts twenty-foot long sign in Dining Commons stating that they are “personally insulted” by Dining Commons food. In shocking red ink, measures are outlined to show Slater System that they “mean business.” The first one is “Attend all meals!! (including breakfast).” It also advises students to continue the boycott and have no inhibitions about complaining.  
7:06 – The sign-up chart in Hegeman has been posted for five hours. So far one person has signed up.  
7:40 – From discussion in council, the point emerges that Slater System runs the coffee shop largely as an accommodation to the school. It would seem that Slater System is not making a fortune through 25-cent hamburgers. Apparently, the

profits are negligible and Slater System would be delighted to drop the coffee shop altogether.  
7:48 – Motion is introduced at council meeting for granting a concession to five students who agree that they will sell coffee and doughnuts to the school the following morning. Debate follows.  
8:06 – The sign-up sheet for rides to Ann’s has been posted for six hours in Hegeman. One person signed up. He has crossed his name off.  
9:02 – After lengthy discussion on the student concession to determine time, place, tenure, etc., the question is finally called and the motion is finally passed.  
9:16 – (from Council minutes) “After numerous decisions had been arrived at, Mr. Weissman appeared to announce that the five students mentioned found themselves unable to offer the community such a part-time service for various sundry reasons.”  
9:25 – Council is informed that as it is meeting, there is a concession operating illegally in the lobby of Albee.  
9:26 – There is evidently a faction present which is pressuring for support of the student concession in the lobby.  
9:27 – Noble intentions notwithstanding, it is felt that the group should be condemned because it is using a lobby.  
9:30 – Mr. Strauss called the illegal concession an “illegal concession.”  
9:31 – In defending the illegal concession, Mr. Lensing made a motion that the Community Council state is sympathetic with anyone attempting to improve the existing or arising conditions; that the council is willing to aid any such groups in any way possible. As Mr. Lensing is talking, just above his head, in the lobby of Albee, a dungareed student in glasses is doing his part in attempting to improve existing conditions and support the boycott by selling salami sandwiches and cider. The salami sandwiches are forty cents apiece. The cider is ten cents a cup. The sandwiches cost him just under 18 cents apiece to make. He buys the cider from Mr. Hoyt.

### a response:

We, the students, are faced with an unpleasant three-fold situation in dining commons. The nature of the situation is: overcrowding, inadequate meals, and perpetual chaos.  
Of the first condition, overcrowding, we have no control. Admissions is the concern of the administration, and if there have been admitted more students than Bard seems able to accommodate that is no fault of ours.  
The solution of the food problem may not be immediate and will ultimately be the result of negotiations between the administration and the Slater system representative.  
The chaos is caused by and can be eliminated by the students. Bard is neither a country club nor a finishing school, and if it were to develop into either it would be a prostitution of the college.  
As vague as is the “Bard ideal,” that for which students seem to fight, one can easily associate scholarship with the Bard that most of us would enjoy. With the development of the mind, though, should come a certain amount of dignity and self-respect. An individual possessing dignity and self-respect will in turn have respect for others. One finds little dignity in dining commons. Aside from slight physical exertion, the gymnastics that are occasionally noticed, lack of dignity is manifested at means by unsavory table manners and lack of consideration for others. My cry is not for gracious living at Bard; I will never expect hors d’oeuvres at dinner. But, is dignity, self-respect, and consideration alien to us at Bard? We, the students, can easily correct the perpetual chaos in dining commons. We need no posters, no petitions, no great organization with a “vital core” campaigning. Even two hundred students thinking for only a few minutes at each meal about his or her actions would eliminate some of the unpleasantness at meals. For those of us who pride ourselves on our ability to think, would it be so difficult to remedy the perpetual chaos, one third of our dining commons’ malady?  
-Marjory Eckmann